

**Theories and mechanisms of Imperialism & Expansion of European Empires**

**Lesson: Theories and mechanisms of Imperialism & Expansion  
of European Empires**

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### 6.1. Introduction

Imperialism is a process of extending control by one state over other. It is derived from the Latin word 'imperium', which means command and domination. It, therefore, refers to supreme rule over foreign lands and people. The essence of imperialism is the exercise of the authority or power by one state over other state, people and territory. It is state centric. It denotes political sovereignty asserted by force over subject peoples independent of their will or consent. Wars, conquest and exploitation become its manifestation.

### 6.2. Imperialism and Colonialism

There is a difference between 'empire' and 'colony', and so between 'colonialism' and 'imperialism'. Empire means universal sovereignty, an absolute control over a territory and people. Europe had witnessed rise and fall of many empires, such as Roman Empire, Ottoman Empire, Habsburg Empire and others.

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On the other hand, a colony implies transplantation of surplus population with their natural habits, way of life and system of government to a distant territory which is vacant or thinly populated. But the term imperialism does not necessarily involve migration of population.

The phenomenon which existed in the era of capitalism was imperialism. Imperialism of the late nineteenth century was a new phenomenon. It was distinct from the earlier forms of conquest and political domination. It was an endeavour of the great controllers of industry to broaden the channel for the flow of their surplus wealth and capital by seeking foreign markets and foreign investment to take off the goods and capital they could not sell or use at home.

Imperialism was the ferocious child of an era of competition: competition between rival industrial capitalists and economies of the nations. The system was new. Industrial capitalism and free trade was replaced by finance capitalism and protective tariff. Because of cut throat competition and rivalry, the period was marked by uncertainty in business circle. To protect and procure markets, the ruling class demanded tariff and expansion, and intervention of the state in the economic affairs.

The 'new imperialism' of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was also distinct from the earlier types by its scope, intensity and long range consequences. It transformed culture, economy and also the states. This new imperialism had economic roots in a specific new phase of capitalism. It led to the territorial division of the world among great capitalist powers into a set of formal and informal colonies, and also sphere of influence. The rivalry among the capitalist powers was one reason which brought the world on the threshold of war.

### 6.3. Forms of Imperialism

Imperialism may be explained as formal and informal.

**6.3.1 Formal imperialism** implies exercise of direct rule. The imperialist nations annexed territories outright and established new governments to subjugate and administer other states and people. In some cases, formal imperialism worked through indirect rule. In such cases the conquering powers reached and ruled through the indigenous governmental machinery

**6.3.2 Informal imperialism** refers to a more subtle and less visible exercise of sovereign power. In this case the strong state allowed the subject state to maintain its system of government. In case of formal imperialism the imperial power dictated its policies and programme. Informal imperialism took the form of carving out zones of European sovereignty and privileges such as ports, sphere of influence or interest.

**6.3.3** Both formal and informal imperialism expanded dramatically in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Scramble for Africa presents to us how informal imperialism turns into a formal one. In Asia the western states used the informal empire in the sections of China and Turkey and at some other places. India is an example of direct imperialism.

Thus, imperialism was a European phenomenon, and reflected the demands of politics of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is a key to understand the politics of the era which terminated in 1914. In this 'age of imperialism' all the major European powers including Russia, U.S.A joined the race.

### 6.4. Stages

Capitalist expansion took place in three stages which led to the formation of empires. These stages were:

(a) *Mercantile stage and the merchant capitalist empire*: In this stage the pioneer powers established overseas empires. They were: Portugal and Spain.

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(b) *Industrial capitalism and empire of free trade*: The powers adopted the golden policy of trade without rule, because the resources were in abundance and the capacity to utilize them limited. The powers engaged in this second phase were Britain, France and Netherlands.

(c) *Finance capitalism and occupation*: This is the third stage. Free trade was replaced by protective tariff. The powers involved were Britain, France, Germany and Russia.

### 6.5. Theories of Imperialism

Why did the phenomenon 'new imperialism' take place in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century? It is also explained by the theory of '**Social Darwinism**'. The theory of 'survival of the fittest' is coined by sociologist Herbert Spencer. Social Darwinism is used to explain ideologies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It reflects the struggle for existence being used to justify social policies which have no sympathy for those who are unable to support themselves. Such theories, that is, the struggle for existence and the 'survival of the fittest' had a great popular vogue in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when they were applied to the rivalries of the Great Powers and provided a pseudo-biological justification for power politics, imperialism and war. The velocity, ferocity, intensity and long term consequences of the so called new imperialism have generated a heated debate on its causes. Two types of views are found to explain the European phenomenon:

(1) *Economic interpretation*: It includes two views: (a) Radical view expressed by A.J. Hobson, J. Schumpeter and Max Weber, and the other view (b) The Marxist view by R. Hilferding, Rosa Luxemburg and V.I. Lenin.

(2) *Non economic interpretation*: This group of scholars include liberal and revisionists historians like D.K. Fieldhouse, R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins

#### 6.5.1.1 Theory of Economic Interpretation: The Radical View

The glut of capital and the declining tendency of the rate of profit at home stimulated imperialism. **J.A. Hobson**, a British economist and social thinker, put forward the "*theory of under consumption*". He says that the economic tap root of imperialism lay in the export of capital for investment opportunities which were declining at home, but were available outside. Abundance of capital in the metropolitan countries looked for higher profits overseas. So foreign investment led to conquest; imperialism was the outcome of the need for new outlet for the capital investment.

Profits from the colonial and foreign investment looked enormous and also sustained domestic rate of profit. Over production and surplus capital forced Britain, France, Germany and others to place larger portion of their economic resources outside the area of their present domain and then stimulated the policy of political expansion.

Hobson diagnosed that the root cause of imperialism was economic ills. Industries started producing more capital, the financiers invested their surplus capital for more profits in unstable countries and then demanded the government interference to protect their investments.

Thus, according to Hobson, the imperialism after 1870 was due to malfunctioning of the capitalist system in the metropolitan cities. He further says that just distribution of wealth could make imperialism redundant. By removing the accumulated surplus capital, imperialism would have been redundant. In his view there was no surplus capital which could not be invested in home industries. It was, on the

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other hand, quick easy profit motive which drove the capital out and led to imperialism. (Hobson, J.A. *Imperialism – A Study*, pp 80-82.)

**6.5.1.2 J. Schumpeter**, an Austrian economist, says that capitalist imperialism is a transient phenomenon. Under capitalism, monopoly capital creates a powerful and influential social group that pressurizes the executive control in colonies and protectorates for the sake of higher profits. Schumpeter believes that capitalism in its purest form is antithetical to imperialism. It thrives best with peace and free trade. However, under capitalism a powerful and influential social group put pressure for exclusive control in colonies and protectorates for the sake of higher profits. He agrees with Hobson that the return to protectionism – an exploded theory of mercantilism – was the characteristic aspect of the new imperialism.

Atavism is a tendency to revert to an ancestral type. Schumpeter has used this term to explain the world war-1 of the 20<sup>th</sup> century liberal Europe. Schumpeter explains the world war-1 in terms of “Atavism”. He says that vestigial government in Europe such as German Empire and Russian Empire, Ottoman Empire and Austro-Hungarian Empire pulled the liberal course into war and that the liberal structure of the continent did not cause it. He believes, capitalism in its purest form, is antithetical to imperialism, it thrives best with peace and free trade. He says, liberalism and commerce would continue to have soothing effect in international relations and that war would not arise in nations who are built on commercial ties.

However, under capitalism, monopoly capitalism creates powerful and influential social groups that put pressure for exclusive control in colonies and protectorates for the sake of higher profits. Support for these policies also came from some other groups with no rational interest in imperialism. They possessed ‘atavistic’ aggressive instincts acquired in earlier eras of human evolution. Capitalist imperialism is therefore a transient phenomenon. (Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes*, 72 – 92).

### 6.5.2 The Marxist View

For the Marxists the main feature of the capitalist economic relations is the accumulation of the capital by a class of capitalists, not for hoarding but for development under competitive pressure of new productive forces to generate still more capital.

**6.5.2.1 V.I. Lenin** defines imperialism as the *highest stage of capitalism*. It is the monopoly stage of capitalism. Lenin in his book '*Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*' emphasizes the current importance of finance capital rather than industrial, and the priority of the desire to find new outlet for investment rather than new markets. Monopoly is the central element in Lenin's theory. It was the desire behind the European imperialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to him, it was a system of free competition up to 1860. But by 1900 it changed to opposite of competition, - i.e., monopoly. Thus imperialism was in fact the monopoly stage of capitalism. On the role of finance capital, Lenin says that lenders secured higher return to their investment in exotic countries of Africa and Asia than at home. The capitalists could make maximum gains in the territories subject to their direct political control. (Lenin, *op cit*. pp 30-40, & 68-81)

Thus both Hobson and Lenin maintain that there existed in ‘capitalist’ countries a tremendous pressure for overseas investment, which was the main factor in producing Imperialist expansion after 1870. However, Hobson and Lenin differ on some points. Whereas to Hobson imperialism was due to malfunctioning of the capitalist system and capable of reform; to Lenin, it was the highest and the final stage of inevitable capitalist development which could be changed by revolution.

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Further Lenin also theorised the phrase “Aristocracy of labour”, and pointed out that they were the “real agents of the bourgeoisie in the working class movement, the labour lieutenants of the capitalist class”..

This labour aristocracy poses a serious threat to the revolutionary movement in the capitalist world. The formation of this class of aristocracy is a feature of the capitalism at its highest imperialist stage of development. (*Collected Works*, vol.22,pp 194-195)

### **Labour Aristocracy**

“Labour Aristocracy” is a phenomenon in the monopoly capitalism. It is a specific type of trade unionism. In the Marxist theory those workers (proletarians) in developed countries who benefit from the improvised workers of under develop countries form an ‘aristocracy of labour’.

Source:[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labor\\_aristocracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labor_aristocracy)

**6.5.2.2 R. Hilferding**, an Austrian socialist, sees imperialism as the latest and probably the last stage of capitalist development. It is a stage in which free competition no longer exists; in which trusts, cartels and monopolies are the rule and finance capital assumes control over industrial capital. He sees imperial expansion as the necessity of the monopoly capitalist in each native state for new areas to be brought under the jurisdiction of the capitalist state to develop raw material production, safeguard capital investment and guarantee markets for each national monopoly capitalist output. Thus, modern imperialism was the product of capital export. Hilferding, thus, believes that imperialism was performing dual functions. On the one hand, it was heightening class conflict, and on the other, concentrating economic power. He called it the final stage of capitalism.

**6.5.2.3 Rosa Luxemburg**, a Polish socialist active in Germany, suggests that the age of imperialism began about 1895 when the capitalist system had penetrated nearly every corner of the globe. The struggle to gain exclusive control over ‘what still remained open of the non capitalist environment’ increased international tension. In her book ‘*The Accumulation of Capital*’ (published in 1913) she expresses her view that the rise of imperialism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a natural consequence of a process of expansion which had been going on for centuries. According to her, imperialism resulted from the endeavours of the rising capitalist powers. It was particularly to secure foreign fields for expansion in a world already partitioned among rival powers in earlier decades. It was the movement for the repartition rather than partition of the globe. The new era began about 1895 when Germany set out to challenge the British supremacy at sea, and which finally culminated in the war of 1914.

**6.5.2.4 Nickolai Bukharin**, a Russian Bolshevik, says that there was a structural ‘conflict between world economy and the limitations of the national state’. Each national clique sought profit by protecting its own house base with high tariff walls while insisting on its right to sell freely in the territory under the domination of the competing cliques. When unimpeded access was denied, each clique came to see ‘war as the only solution of the problem’. The colonies of the great powers yielded ‘a

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colossal income' which made it possible to raise the wages of 'European and American workers'.

### 6.5.3 Non-Economic Theories

There are some theories which are based on issues other than economic.

**6.5.3.1** Among them one is the theory of '**prestige and power**'. This theory is advanced by D.K. Fieldhouse. He says that the 'new imperialism' of the late nineteenth century was the natural outcome of 'the militant nationalism' which dominated Europe after the victory of Bismarck's policy of 'blood and iron'. This policy was applied in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871. After 1870 Europe became an armed camp. Emergence of new Germany changed the old balance of power. Fieldhouse concludes that different alliances, bitter rivalry and keen diplomacy found Africa a free play ground.

**6.5.3.2 The theory of strategy** is advanced by R.Robinson and J.Gallagher. According to this theory, strategic considerations were vital reasons in colonial expansion. Cairo became the linchpin of the British strategy. It hinged on the Cape in the south, and the Suez Canal in the north to safeguard the route to India. For this reason they decided to stay in Egypt, but this led to a series of reaction from the rival powers. As a result the other European powers became active to occupy land and secure their possessions.

**6.5.3.3** The revisionist view is presented by **the theory of 'gentlemanly capitalism'**. The theory gives a new explanation. It adds cultural dimension to imperialism. The theory is propounded by P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins. They claim that main impulses for imperialist expansion were generated by a constantly changing mixture of aristocracy, service class and financial interests which were the foundation of the elite structure. They call it 'gentleman's capitalism' which does not originate in industry. 'Gentleman capitalist' had a clear understanding of the market economy, and knew how to extract benefit from it. A gentleman possessed the skill to inspire confidence. His word was his bond, and so transactions were both informal and efficient. Gentleman's enterprise was strongly personal, and was sustained by a social net work, which in turn was held together by the leisure needed to cultivate it. Thus, the main theme of Cain and Hopkins is to establish a connection between gentlemanly capitalism based on landed wealth and overseas expansion.

## 6.6 Motives

There were several main considerations for the spread of new imperialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. P.T. Moon has identified some of them: cut throat competition, revolution in the means of communication, demand of the industrial nations for tropical and sub-tropical products, surplus capital and national honour.

**6.6.1 Cut Throat Competition:** Each great industrial nation was making cloth, iron and steel and other such items more than what their own inhabitants could possibly consume at home. Each one was producing surplus, and this surplus had to be sold out. But they were not willing to be a market for other's surplus in the major competitive fields. So, they resorted to establish protective tariff. So the only alternative was to acquire colonies whose markets could be monopolized by the industries of the mother country. 'Surplus manufacture' provided the chief economic cause of the imperialistic expansion of Europe in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and rivalry for colonial markets is a consequence of the surplus production.

**6.6.2 Revolution in the Means of Communication:** The development of steamship, locomotives and telegraph also contributed to the gigantic increase of colonial trade 1870 onwards. Troops could be moved to the tropics speedily to defend or conquer areas. In this matter building of railways and operation of shipping lines were important economic enterprises.

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### 6.6.3 The Demand of the Industrial Nations for Tropical and Sub-tropical Products:

The British troops stayed in Egypt and India for cotton. Egypt was the chief producer of fine long staple cotton. Rubber grew in Congo and the Amazon valley. Similarly, coffee, cocoa, tea, sugar, coconut and coconut oil provided the motive for the conquest of sunny islands of South Pacific. Phosphate drew Europeans to North African colonies. Tin led to domination of the parts of China. Gold mines attracted Britain to Transvaal. Thus, the desire for tropical products was one of the motives for imperialism.

**6.6.4 'Surplus capital':** became the dominant force of incentives in the 19<sup>th</sup> century imperialism. Money lending countries of Europe led to annex their debtors in Africa and Asia. It was quick easy profit motive which drove Europeans out. Consequent need to safeguard their capital led to imperialism.

**6.6.5 National Honour:** The spirit of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was political nationalism. Germany achieved national unity by 'blood and iron' means. Italy was welded into nationhood by the same policy, Balkan nations emerged from Near Eastern turmoil. Russia began to practice national policy of 'Russification'. Disraeli revised the British patriotism. French nationalism became a bitter passion after the loss of Alsace and Lorain. Colonial conferences were held in Europe to enhance the prestige and power. Again, the decision of Britain to stay in Egypt led to a chain of reactions, and accelerated the process of acquiring colonies.

## 6.7. Mechanisms of Imperialism

There were two modes of imperialism:

a. *Informal mode* – It includes the golden policy to trade without rule and political responsibility, and also the sphere of influence. It continued up to 1870, this mode was in practice in Africa. In Asia it was in operation from the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Scramble for China was also a result of this mechanism.

b. *Formal mode or effective occupation:* Instruments of this mode included activities like, – laying of railway lines, maintaining law and order or control over natives. Under this mechanism different forms were adopted in Africa and Asia: *Colonization. Protectorate: Lease hold, Concessions, Mandate system.*

**6.7.1 Sphere of Influence:** In this mode a state had special interest in the country. This was signified by the presence of some exclusive interest in the area, for example, preferential or exclusive rights to develop the area economically. The country, however, was not politically controlled. But other states should not try to establish any kind of control over the country. The dominant state had only limited economic interests in the region, and did not control its internal governance, or direct its politics. This was called the “sphere of interest” as distinct from “area of control”.

**6.7.2 Effective Occupation:** Effective Occupation implied that the power was responsible for the maintenance of law and order, protection of foreigners and control over natives, their policies and programme directly. In brief, the power was directly responsible for the governance and administration of the area

**6.7.3 Colonization:** The factors like climats, economic potential and strategic importance were the guiding considerations for colonizing an area. An example is South Africa where the Britishers and the Boers (Dutch) were settled.

**6.7.3. Protectorate:** International law defines a **protectorate** as an autonomous territory, protected diplomatically or militarily by a stronger state

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against third party. However, the protectorate retains sufficient measure of sovereignty and remains a state under international law.

During the period of new imperialism the protectorate was often reduced to a *de facto* condition similar to a colony. In fact, the pre-existing native state served as an agent of indirect rule. Sometimes a chartered company guaranteed protection to a native state, and thus the company became a *de facto* ruler with independent foreign policy and armed forces. In many cases protectorates were announced with a formal agreement with the native ruler. Colonial protectors frequently decided to reshuffle several protectorates into

### How the Protectorates were Signed?

It is interesting to know how the protectorates were formed, and how the native's consent was obtained on the document. The native rulers were ignorant of the European language, and the Europeans of the native language. Protectorates were created by entering into a treaty agreement with the native ruler. The difficulty of the language was overcome by asking the native to put a "cross" ( X ) on the document, and the agreement was legalized. And the protectorate came into existence.

a new, artificial unit without consulting the protectorates. The Berlin agreement of February 26, 1895 allowed the colonial powers to declare in Black Africa protectorates that could be established by diplomatic notification, even without actual possession on the ground.

**6.7.4 Lease Hold:** Lease hold method was used in China by the European powers, specially in the case of the ports. The policy was started by Germany and followed by others. The territory was not annexed, but was acquired on lease for ninety years or twenty five years. The region was used as naval base and a commercial port. Four great European powers obtained leased ports.

**6.7.5 Concessions:** Concessions were obtained to establish their sphere of interest. It was widely practised in Asia. In China, thus, started a race for concessions: concessions for railway building and mining were obtained by the European powers. It was a novel method of obtaining the Chinese consent to business propositions. Thus the powers could keep the rivals at a distance.

### Interesting Facts: Vanguard of Imperialism

**Civilizing Mission** is called differently by different people: Mission civilisatrice in the French, *Missão civilizadora* in Portuguese. It is an argument to justify Europeans intervention or colonization. It claims to contribute to the spread of civilization, mostly amounting to the Westernization of indigenous people.

It was notably the underlying principle of the French and Portuguese colonial rule in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was influential in the French colonies of Algeria, French West Africa and Indochina. In the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Guinea, Mozambique, and Timor also it was practised. The European colonial powers argued that it was their duty to bring Western civilization to the people whom they perceived as backward. The Europeans would argue that it was their duty to Westernize them in accordance with a colonial ideology known as "assimilation". And for this purpose the missionaries were also active in spreading Christianity and education.

**Explorers, discoverers** and missionaries and missionary organizations played important role in helping imperialism. They were treated as representatives of the European state to which they belonged. Their activity was justified as humanitarian crusade to advance science, spread the gospel, abolish slavery and uplift the natives. With the pace of time the missionaries became tools of imperialism. They thought in terms of nationalism and in the interest of their home country. Missionaries represented different nationalities and different faiths of Christianity – Catholic and Protestants. Their activities paved the way for the eventual occupation of the territories by the respective powers. There was a close coordination between the home government and the missionaries. And thus they represented the state. This is why in the early years they were regarded "the vanguards of imperialism". This also explains the meaning of "flag follows the Gospel".

Missionary activity claimed to give the comforts of Christianity to "heathen races". It was argued that non-Europeans would benefit from Western legal institutions or technology even if imposed by force. Such arguments were for despatching expeditionary forces to distant lands. Rudyard Kipling, a poet, called it 'whiteman's burden'. The white man's burden was to govern and civilize the Asiatics and Africans who were backward peoples, who were half devils and half child, sullen and wild. Jules Ferry of France claimed that the "superior races" have the duty to civilize the inferior races".

David Livingstone, a geographer, missionary and explorer, advocated that 'commerce and Christianity would bring salvation to the dark continent'. He was followed by M.M. Stanley who explored Congo Basin in Central Africa, and became an apostle of imperialism. Explorers and adventurers were conspicuous in early days of imperialism and were vanguards. The wealth of Africa and Asia was revealed by the reports and publications of the explorers and missionaries.

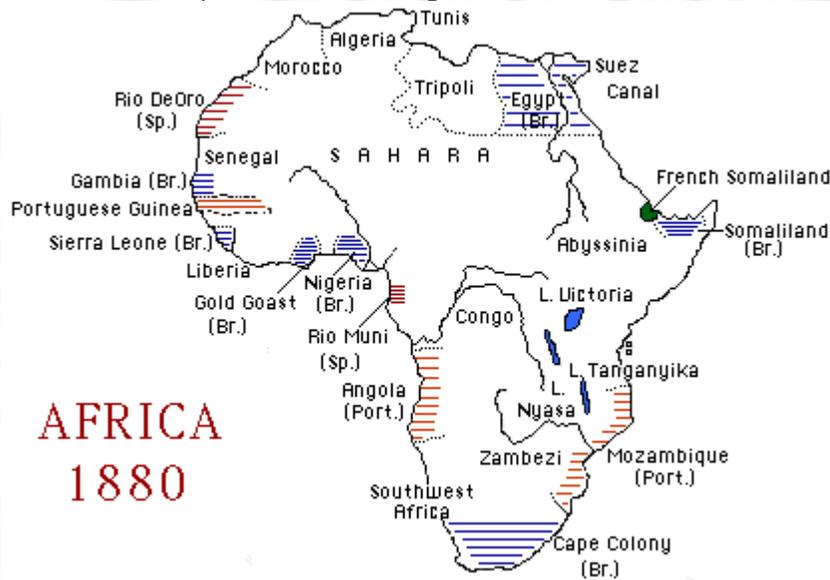
Source: Original

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### 6.8 Expansion in Africa

European contacts with the continent of Africa may be traced from the 15<sup>th</sup> century when the ships used to call at the African coasts for refueling and coastal trade. Gradually the contacts developed and the European interest in Africa became larger and deeper. In this contact the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope and the discovery of the sea route to India through Cape were important events.

Rich in natural resources, Africa was the continent comparatively less guarded and easy to exploit. Being in the neighborhood, transportation also presented no serious problem. The interior of the continent was unoccupied by the European powers. They had by the end of 1870s settled on the coast only. They controlled a large area with no formal political authority, but by what is known as the 'sphere of influence'. See the Map below indicating the coastal settlement in Africa in 1880.



Source: Scramble for Africa

<http://www.uiowa.edu/~c016003d/Assignments/MapsMapTerms/AfricaColonial.htm> -

The settlement along the coast line combined the trading activity which began from the period of 'silent trade' in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. It developed into enormous triangular trade from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The items and produce which attracted the Europeans had a wide range and included metals, animal products, forest products, and slaves. The staple commodity, rivers, trading routes and markets, trading centres, and ports guided the future occupation of the hinterland.

### Did You Know?

The **Silent trade**, is also known as the dumb barter or depot trade. It was a method by which people with no common language could barter goods. Its process may be explained in the following way. *Group A* would leave trade goods in a prominent position and signal by gong, fire, or drum announcing, that they had left goods. *Group B* would then arrive at the spot, examine the goods and deposit their trade goods that they wanted to exchange and withdraw. *Group A* would then return and either accept the offer and take the goods from *Group B*. In case the deal was not acceptable, they would withdraw again leaving *Group B* to add to or change out items to match the value. The trade ended when both the parties accepted the trade.

The practice was certainly well established between tribes in Africa. Prince Henry the Navigator had recorded this practice when he occupied Ceuta in 1415.

Source: Original



### Historical Context

**Triangular trade**, or **Trade triangle**, is a historical term indicating trade among three ports or regions. Triangular trade usually evolved when a region exported commodities that were not required in the region from which its major imports came.

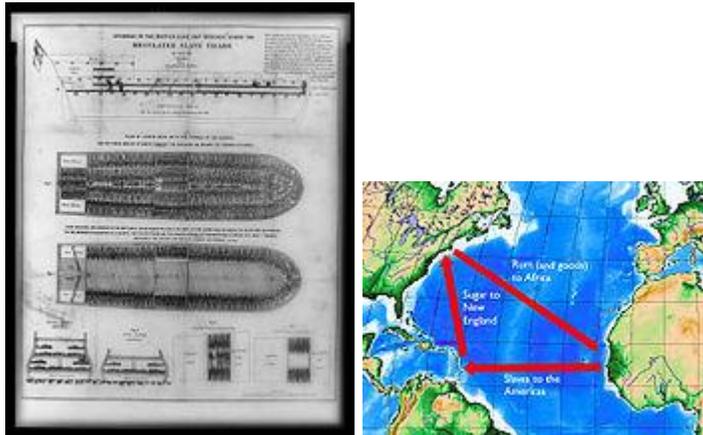


Figure-1 illustrates the stowage of African slaves on a British slave ship.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_slavery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_slavery)

Figure-2 is the depiction of the Triangular Trade of slaves, sugar and rum with New England instead of Europe as the third corner.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triangular\\_trade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triangular_trade)

The triangular trade thus provided a method for rectifying trade imbalances between those regions. The best-known triangular trading system is the transatlantic slave trade. This trade operated during the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries, and carrying slaves, cash crops, and manufactured goods between West Africa, Caribbean or American colonies and the European colonial powers.

The use of African slaves was fundamental to growing colonial cash crops, which were exported to Europe. European goods, in turn, were used to purchase African slaves, which were then brought on the sea lane west from Africa to the Americas, the so called middle passage.

Source: Original

The missionaries and the accounts of the traders gave information about the hinterland that was rich in mineral resources and products particularly coconut oil of West Africa, Egyptian cotton, rice, corn, Algerian wine, iron and olive oil of Tunisia, ground nut of Senegal, rubber of Togoland, coconut and coconut oil of Congo, rubber, ivory and many such other items.

The nature of trade was mercantile, it was free. The resources were abundant and the capacity to utilize them limited. But after 1870s there was a change. The factors responsible for this change were politico-economic. After the French defeat in

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1870, there was a shift in the balance of power from France to Germany. Germany emerged a strong power challenging and threatening the supremacy of other powers in Europe.

The economic compulsion was caused by the industrialization in Europe. *Laissez faire* was becoming unworkable and the powers resorted to protectionism. Its impact on the colonies was evident. A firm control over the area became necessary. The year 1884 marks a turning point in the history of Africa. The European political activity in Africa underwent a basic transformation. During the hinterland drive in the process of annexing different parts of Africa, the European powers found themselves locked in confrontation with one another. There was no rule or agency to settle disputes, and ensure regular free supply of raw material and safe markets. The apprehension was that conflicts could develop into serious proportion. A need was, therefore, realized to evolve and adopt a code for future action. With this object in view a conference at Berlin was called by the joint efforts of Bismarck and France. (See the picture below). The out come of the conference was the 'General Act of Berlin' signed at Berlin and ratified by the powers. The Act contained thirty eight Articles in seven chapters. It covered many subjects, notably – freedom of trade in the Congo Basin, freedom of navigation, effective occupation, abolition of slavery and many others.



Berlin Conference to Divide Africa

[wysinger.homestead.com/berlinconference.html](http://wysinger.homestead.com/berlinconference.html)

**6.8.2** The Berlin Act made it necessary to change sphere of influence into 'effective occupation' and this accelerated the process of expansion in Africa. Up to 1870s the powers had 'sphere of influence', but by 1890 the whole of Africa had come under effective occupation of the major powers. However, Liberia in the West and Ethiopia in the East were free from occupation. Within six years after the Berlin conference of 1884 the partition of Africa was complete through treaties and agreements among the European powers without war among themselves, though ignoring the interests of the natives and the geography of Africa.

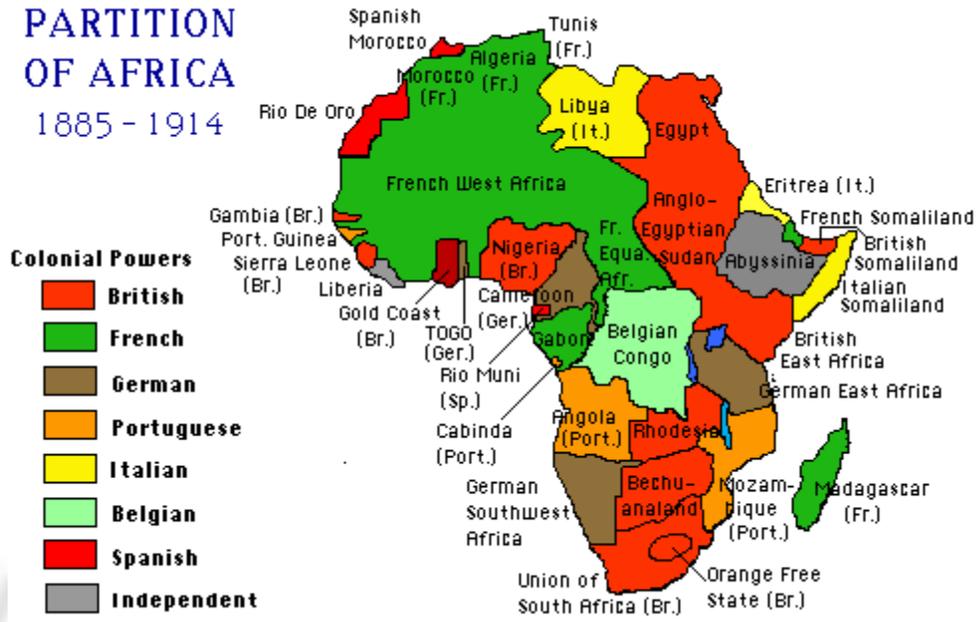
**6.8.3** The rivers were vital for the native produce. They were arteries of trade and commerce and also channels to facilitate hinterland penetration. So they became vital issues of diplomatic activity after 1884. The imperialist expansion was on four sections of Africa:

1. Politics of the Niger in West Africa
2. Politics of the Congo in the Central Africa
3. Politics of gold and diamond in South Africa
4. Politics of the Nile-Suez in North and East Africa.

Britain, France and Germany, - all wanted to connect and consolidate their possessions. Britain wanted a continuous possession from Cape to Cairo. The French mission was from West to East, and the German from Togoland to East Africa through Congo and Angola. The map below shows the occupation of Africa in 1914.

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### PARTITION OF AFRICA 1885 - 1914



Source: Scramble for Africa

<http://www.uiowa.edu/~c016003d/Assignments/MapsMapTerms/AfricaColonial.htm>

### 6. 9. Expansion in Asia

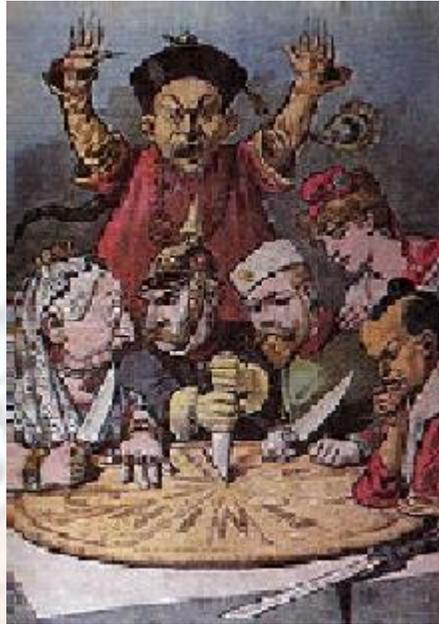
Imperialist expansion in Asia differed from that of Africa in degree of contact which the European nations were able to establish. The people of Asia with their old and highly developed civilization offered greater resistance to conquest and domination. In the search for lucrative trade connections, the Western powers did not overlook Japan, but they found the doors there tightly locked. Japan repelled all attempts at control and soon became a full imperialist nation in her own right.

Though Asia had been open to European influence and conquest from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a big part of it remained in isolation. In the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain controlled India and some of the surrounding territories. Similarly, the Dutch held most of the islands of the East Indies, and Spain retained Philippines. The French and the Portuguese could establish small trading settlements on the Indian coasts. The ancient and big empire of China remained isolated from the European civilization for a considerable time. The Chinese regarded the western civilization inferior to theirs. They refused to accept Western diplomatic representatives, persecuted Christian missionaries and allowed only a little of commerce with the West.

In most of Asia the European powers struggled for the 'sphere of influence'. These territories remained nominally independent. They were such as China, Persia and Ottoman Empire.

China was a big prosperous empire ruled by Manchu dynasty in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This dynasty was about two hundred years old, but shadowy because the country had 18 provinces which were largely independent. Also, China was militarily weak. But the Chinese did not want foreigners in the country. They resisted foreign trade at the port of Canton. Since they were militarily weak, they succumbed to the pressure to open more and more ports to foreign trade. The Opium War of 1842 and 1858 opened the Chinese ports to trade for Britain, France, Spain, Belgium and Netherlands. The cartoon below shows the European powers discussing China.

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A Cartoon

A shocked [mandarin](#) in [Manchu](#) robes in the back, with [Queen Victoria](#) (United Kingdom), [Wilhelm II](#) (Germany), [Nicholas II](#) (Russia), [Marianne](#) (France), and [Emperor Meiji](#) (Japan) discussing how to cut up a plate with *Chine* ("China" in French) written on it.

(Source : "New Imperialism" from Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Imperialism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Imperialism))

In the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century efforts were made to obtain commercial and extra territorial rights in China. Various western countries proceeded to establish their own domination over the large sections of the Chinese territories. Scramble for concessions and special privileges began by Germany and Portugal and also by Japan.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century European powers were keen to dismember China, but they could not agree on the demarcation of spoils. China too, avoided complete partitioning by the European powers. Their mutual rivalry helped China. Britain, France, Germany, Russia, U.S.A. and Japan mutually agreed on a special treaty relating to ports, sphere of influence and long term lease of Chinese territories. At the initiative of the American Secretary of State, John May, the powers agreed in 1899 to follow an open door policy in China and not to discriminate against the commerce of other nations in their sphere of influence.

Thus before the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Chinese had to give up their best ports. They were leased to foreign nations. Also, the coastal and inland trade was now controlled by the foreigners. Almost two-thirds of the country had been marked out as 'sphere of influence' by powers, and fourteen principal ports were also controlled by them. And Russia controlled the Trans Siberian Railway. Similarly Germany had started work on the Berlin to Baghdad Railway Project  
The Map below shows the expansion of European imperialism in Asia.

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Source: [http://www.emersonkent.com/map\\_archive/imperialism\\_asia\\_map.htm](http://www.emersonkent.com/map_archive/imperialism_asia_map.htm)

In Indonesia the British and the Dutch imperialists clashed. Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Dutch had established a strong foothold in Indonesia and had established there by fortifying their trading ports. They had islands such as Sumatra, Java and Borneo. The British, the Dutch and the Germans divided New Guinea among themselves. The Germans also occupied many nearby islands and named them 'Bismarck Archipelago. She also extended her dominance in the Marshal Islands, Samoan Islands, and also purchased Marianne from Spain.

Britain also established her dominance over South Solomon, Tonga and Gilbert Islands.

France, too, did not lag behind in Southeast Asia. She annexed Marquesas and the Society Islands. In Indochina France captured Tonkin and Annam. In 1887 France created the Union of Indochina which included Tonkin, Annam, Cochin-china and Cambodia.

The Tsars of Russia also pursued the expansionist policy. They took Turkestan and Bessarabia from Turkey and Armenia from Persia.

### Interesting Details

#### Fashoda

Fashoda is a small town in Sudan on the upper Nile. It was the centre of crisis in Anglo-French relations. In 1898 the British troops under Lord Kitchner advancing upto the Nile encountered a French troop contingent led by Marchand. The British feared that the French intended eventually to dam the Nile, and thus hamper the flow of water to Egypt for irrigation. A war seemed imminent between the two, but was averted. By an agreement of 1899, the French renounced their claim to the Nile valley. The town Fashoda was renamed as 'Kodak' after the Anglo-French negotiations in 1904. this was done to remove the French humiliation.

#### Kiaochow

Kiaochow is a bay in the Gulf of PENCHILI, Northern China. In 1897 the Germans seized Kiaochow in revenge for the murder of two missionaries. The Germans established a formidable naval base at Tsingtao and acquired 200sq miles on ninety nine years lease. The German capitalists secured mining rights, and rights for railway construction. This German action precipitated a European rush to secure bases and ports in China

#### Trans Siberian Railway

In 1891 Tsar Alexander-III approved the project for opening up the farthest parts of the Russian empire by a railway across Siberia. It was intended by a new route for world trade between Europe and the Far East, and Russia was to profit from it. The work on the railway started. Most of the construction work had been done by 1904, but the project was not finally completed till 1917.

Source: Original

### 6.10 Consequences of Expansion on Europe

By 1890 European occupation in Africa was over, and in Asia the 'sphere of influence', leased ports, railway concessions and the mining rights of the Europeans were completed by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the imperialist expansion created tension among the European powers while completing their grand projects, such as the British 'Cape to Cairo', or the French 'West to East'; or Russian 'Trans-Siberian Railway', or the German 'Berlin to Baghdad railway'. On many occasions the powers were at the verge of war, e.g., at Fashoda in Sudan, the British in two Boer republics in South Africa, British and Russian tensions in Persia, Germany and France in Morocco, Pan Slavism and Pan Germans in the Balkans and at many other cases.

### 6.11 Foreshadow of World War-I

After discussing imperialism and its expansion, it is interesting to examine its impact on world politics. How the imperialism led the world towards hot war of 1914? One thing which can be said with some certainty is that imperialism was the root which caused tension among the European powers. In the past decades there were many

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occasions when the powers came close to the point of war; and though the war was averted through negotiations, but the scars of tension did remain. These scars sharpened the rivalry of the powers. The tension and crisis which took place in Africa and Asia assumed more dramatic dimension, and to ease themselves from such tension the powers entered into alliances.

The deep frictions, imperialist rivalries, resentment, jealousies, cut throat competition safety of economic imperialism led the competing nations towards power-blocks. The war was lurking in the process. The powers were now actively engaged in forming alliances with like minded parties. At this stage, two blocks emerged. One was of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria. The common bond was Teutonic domination of the Near East. The other was Republican France, and Monarchist England. They were bound by the far reaching imperialist bargain of *Entente Cordiale* of 1904. It was a colonial settlement. It marked a new era in European politics. Liberal England and Tsarist Russia made peace by an agreement of 1907 on Middle East. The combination of Russian and British imperialism was one of the most important factor which shaped the international situation.

And the result of the above alliances was the division of Europe into two power blocks. It was this power block diplomacy which made local war a European war and then a world war. It can hardly be said that one of the great powers was more responsible than the other for the international jealousies and friction.

The alignment of the European powers was dictated by the interests of imperialism, and not by humanism or democracy or kinship of culture. The impact was so deep that the arch rivals entered into friendly alignments to protect their interests; the alliance of Britain, France and Russia against Germany, Austria, Hungary and Turkey is the example. The two camps were popularly known as Allied Powers and the Central Powers.

The gift of imperialism were frictions, rivalries, resentments, and jealousies. And for this no one nation was exclusively responsible.

In the war of 1914, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria were defeated. The victors divided among themselves the colonies of the defeated nations.

After the war two new systems came into being: the mandate system and neo imperialism.

(a) A new system of imperialism which emerged after the world war of 1914 was called the Mandate System. According to Covenant 21 of the League of Nations the victorious powers divided among themselves the colonies of the defeated nations. They owned the responsibility for the well being and the development of the colony.

(b) The other development is the emergence of 'neo imperialism'. The concept of imperialism or new imperialism has gone a change in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The term suggests predominance of culture and values of the former colonial power or the dominant state. Neo imperialism implies the existence and domination of foreign direction and control over a country's economic, cultural and educational affairs and policies by another nation. The dominant nation has no liability. Its instruments are: aid, advisors, councillors.

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### Name the Author

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. who put forward the theory of 'under consumption'?       | a.Hobson, b.Lenin, c.Bukharin, d.Schumpeter                 |
| 2. Who said 'imperialism is the final stage of capitalism'? | a.Rosa Luxemburg, b.Hilferding, c.Fieldhouse, d.A.G.Hopkins |
| 3. The theory of 'Prestige and power is advanced by whom?   | a.Gallagher, b.P.J.Cain, c.Fieldhouse, d.Hobson             |

### Choose the Correct Answer

### Answers

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 4. When was the Suez Canal opened?                                 | a. 1878, b.1689, c.1869, d.1909         |
| 5. When was the Berlin Conference held?                            | a.1674, b.1784, c.1934, d.1884          |
| 6. Where did the Industrial Revolution take place first?           | a.England, b.Germany, c.France d.Russia |
| 7. Which country first started the lease-hold system?              | a.Japan, b.France, c.Germany d. Russia  |
| 8. Which country in the Far East the Europeans could not dominate? | a.Korea, b.China, c.Formusa, d.Japan    |

## Theories and mechanisms of Imperialism & Expansion of European Empires

### Where did the following happen?

Match Column One with Two

9. Opium War	a.Port Arthur
10. Boer War	b.China
11. Russo-Japanese war	c.South Africa

### Check the Correct Answer

1 - a,	2 - b,	3 - c,	4 - c,
5 - d,	6 - a,	7 - c,	8 - d,
9 - b,	10 - c,	11 - a.	

### Exercise

1. What do you understand by the term "Imperialism"? Discuss its mechanisms.
2. Imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism. Comment.
3. Expansion in Africa and Asia was a great achievement of imperialism. Do you agree?

### Glossary

**Sphere of interest** - Existence of some exclusive interest in a country, such as monopoly of railway, development of minerals, and others.

**Extra-territoriality** – Exemption of foreigners from the laws of the country.

**Open Door Policy** – The open door policy allowed other powers to have business in the country under control or influence. Doors of freindship and mutual advantage for trade in China or the country under their control were kept open.

**Cutting the China Melon / China Cake** - Scramble for China, dividing China as area of influence/interest

**Manifest Destiny** - 'Manifest Destiny' is a phrase used by the Americans to justify territorial expansion in the mid nineteenth century

## Theories and mechanisms of Imperialism & Expansion of European Empires

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