The Age of Imperialism

Chapter 33
In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the industrial powers of Western Europe swiftly extended their control over vast areas of Africa and Asia. This new imperialism was rationalized by theories of racial and cultural superiority; it was made possible by new technologies of warfare. The United States and Japan, and to a lesser extent Russia, were late arrivals on the imperial stage but soon established themselves as well. Modern imperialism is characterized by the following:

- **Mixed motives.**
- **Competition between imperial powers.**
- **Different models of colonial rule.**
- **Economic colonialism.**
- **Contempt for local cultures.**
Though imperialism has been part of world history since the days of the earliest Mesopotamians, the events of the nineteenth century brought imperialism to a whole new level. Thanks to strong nationalist sentiments used to motivate the populace, industrialization’s output of weaponry and technology, and unparalleled knowledge of world regions and people, European imperial powers quickly established their world hegemony (control); by the end of the century, the United States and Japan would join those imperial nations.
Western Europe's empires were **global**, with territories in the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian Oceans. Britain's territories were so vast, British subjects would claim, "**The sun never sets on the British Empire.**" By the end of this era, Britain's imperial possessions covered **one-fourth** of the Earth.

**PHASES OF EMPIRE**

- **Phase 1**
  - 16th and 17th centuries
  - The Americas
  - Spain and Portugal lead

- **Phase 2**
  - late 18th and 19th centuries
  - Africa and Asia
  - Britain leads
DEFINITION

• Any form of control exercised by one group of people over another beyond the group’s own borders; can be political, economic, and/or cultural
  • Direct Imperialism = direct control of government and the economy
  • Indirect Imperialism = not controlling the government, but controlling the economy by gaining control of trade routes or arranging "unequal treaties"

• By 1914, European countries dominated approximately 84% of the earth’s surface.

• In answering the call of imperialism, Europeans altered the way of life on every continent.
In the mid-1800s, Britain was the most powerful nation in the world.

- Its factories produced more goods than those of any other country.
- The British Navy guarded the oceans so that those goods could be shipped safely to ports around the globe.
- British banks loaned the money needed to build factories, mines, and railroads worldwide.
By the late 1800s, however, Germany and the United States were challenging Britain’s economic leadership.

Faced with possible decline, Britain looked increasingly to its colonies for markets and resources.
CHALLENGING BRITAIN’S LEAD

- Other countries followed Britain’s lead and came to see colonies as necessary for their economic well-being.
  - The **French** and **Dutch** expanded their holdings and by 1900 France had an empire second in size only to Britain’s.
  - **Spain** and **Portugal** attempted to build new empires in Africa.
  - **Austria-Hungary** moved into the Balkans.
  - **Russia** expanded into the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Siberia.

- Countries that had no colonies set out to acquire them.
  - **Belgium**, **Italy**, and **Germany** all took over lands in Africa (with Germany also taking an interest in East Asia & the Pacific islands).
Two non-European countries, the United States and Japan, also became involved in overseas expansion during this period.

- Both the U.S. and Japan were interested in East Asia.
- The U.S. was also deeply tied to Latin America.

Increasingly, Europeans viewed an empire as a measure of national stature or relative power.

Thus, the race for colonies grew out of a strong sense of national pride as well as from economic competition.
MOTIVES FOR IMPERIALISM

Industrialization

- Raw materials were needed to produce goods – rubber, cotton, tin, copper, diamonds, gold, and oil.
- Colonies provided new markets for goods
- New forms of transportation made colonization possible
- New technology made more effective weapons that were necessary to seize foreign lands
- Following the Industrial Revolution, Europeans regarded their new technology (weaponry, telegraphs, railroads etc.) as proof they were better than other peoples.
- Europeans believed that they had the right and duty to bring the results of their progress to other countries.
MOTIVES FOR IMPERIALISM

Nationalism and Militarism
• A sense of pride and devotion to one's country
• Motivated nations to build large empires
  • Unofficial competition to see who could grab the most territory around the world
  • New nations, like Germany and Italy, wanted to show that they belonged with the "Great Powers"
• Acquisition of territories was evidence of national strength and superiority
• To gain power, European nations competed for colonies, particularly in areas that permitted control of trade routes.
• Militaries needed bases around the world to supply their new naval vessels.
• Colonies were used to limit expansion of competing countries.
In the late 19th century, the relationship between imperialism, commerce, and consumerism begin to be celebrated in “spectacles of Empire,” in which technological advancements and industrial growth were put on display in great exhibitions meant to communicate the “greatness” of Empire. The idea behind such exhibitions is that anyone—but really middle-class families—could buy tickets and “enjoy” the Empire on the weekend.

One of the most famous exhibitions of the 19th century was the Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, held in London in 1851, otherwise known as the Crystal Palace exhibition. A monument of modern iron and glass architecture, the exhibition housed and displayed an abundance of goods from British colonies and other nations.
MOTIVES FOR IMPERIALISM

Economic Competition

- Industrial demand for natural resources and new markets spurs a search for colonies.
- Europeans controlled trade in the colonies and set up local economies that were dependent on the Europeans.
- Multinational corporations put pressure on governments to help them claim their "share" of the global economy.
  - Raw materials from Africa and Asia included cotton, rubber, and minerals that industrialized nations wanted to keep their economies booming.
  - Examples of multinational corporations: British East India Company (EIC), Dutch East India Company (VOC).
- Imperial possessions created markets for the mass-produced goods of the industrialized world.
MOTIVES FOR IMPERIALISM

How are the images on the screen a reflection of the economic impact of imperialism?
MOTIVES FOR IMPERIALISM

Missionary Impulse

- Missionaries and many Christian leaders in Europe believed they would do good by spreading their Christian teachings throughout the globe.
- One of the most famous of these missionaries was David Livingstone, a minister from Scotland who went to Africa to preach the Gospel and helped to end the slave trade there.
Social Darwinism and Racism

- European leaders justified their imperialism by applying Darwin’s “survival of the fittest” theory.
- Social Darwinists believe that wealthy, technology, success, and strength make some groups superior to others.
- A prevailing belief in the late 1800s held that Europeans were a superior race, and had a right to claim lands inhabited by non-European people.
MOTIVES FOR IMPERIALISM

How are the images on the screen a reflection of these racist attitudes?
MOTIVES FOR IMPERIALISM

“The White Man’s Burden

- White Europeans believed they were doing their "little brown brothers" in Africa, Asia, and Oceania a favor by conquering and then "civilizing" them
- Bringing "them" technology, education, medicine, and Christianity was a noble cause
- English writer Rudyard Kipling's poem

“Take up the White Man’s burden –
In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
An hundred times made plain,
To seek another’s profit,
And work another’s gain.”
How is this political cartoon a reflection of Kipling’s “White Man’s Burden”?
This political cartoon shows how England and the United States are carrying inferior countries on their backs with the ultimate goal being liberty and civilization after they step over cannibalism, slavery, cruelty, oppression, etc. demonstrating Rudyard Kipling's "White Man's Burden".
MOTIVES FOR IMPERIALISM

Demographics

• Colonies and imperial possessions were viewed as an outlet for surplus population without sacrificing the economic/military advantages of a large population

Biology

• European nations used Social Darwinism ("survival of the fittest") to justify their conquering of other nations; although not new, this belief laid the groundwork for racism throughout the world
TOOLS OF EMPIRE

- Powerful weapons enabled Europeans to impose their rule throughout the world.
  - Rifles, machine guns (Maxim gun), artillery attached to fast-moving ships
- Steamships and railroads made it easier to stake imperial claims.
- New canals made it easier for naval vessels to travel and lowered the cost of trade.
  - Suez Canal (1869) and Panama Canal (1914)
  - Two weeks from Britain to India when it used to take four months
- Rapid communication meant imperial troops could be mobilized in moments and businessmen could respond quickly to business and market developments.
  - Telegraph by land (1830s), telegraph overseas (1870)
ASSAULT ON AFRICA

• Before the 19th century...
  • Interactions between Europeans and Africa's Mediterranean coast dates back to the **Classical Era**
  • In the 16th century, the **Portuguese** set up military posts around South Africa's Cape of Good Hope and along the rim of the Indian Ocean, but they did not establish colonies
  • The Atlantic **slave trade** increased interactions but Europeans did not attempt to establish colonies along West Africa's coast
  • In the mid-17th century, the VOC established a colony at **Cape Town**, South Africa which led to Dutch settlers ("**Boers**") establishing farms throughout the region and creating **tensions** with the African people already in the region
ASSAULT ON AFRICA

- Early 19th century...
  - Britain begins sending settlers into South Africa; conflict with the Boers and greater tensions with Africans
  - 1830 - France becomes a major African colonial power, first in Algeria and then across most of northwest Africa
  - 1880s - Belgium begins the "scramble for Africa" when it grabs control of The Congo (an enormous area in the "heart" of Africa)

- Africa was relatively easy to conquer because of persistent ethnic, linguistic, religious, and geo-physical barriers prevented any unified culture or political organization on a large scale
ASSAULT ON AFRICA

- The Berlin Conference (1884-1885)
  - The "Great Powers" divide Africa among themselves peacefully
  - No representatives from anywhere in Africa!
    - If a nation possessed the coast, it had first rights to the interior
    - Had to have administrators and soldiers in place to solidify claims
    - Had to claim within 25 years or would be open for repossession
ASSAULT ON AFRICA

• **Positive Effects:**
  • Education, new crops, new religions

• **Negative Effects:**
  • Enslavement, loss of raw materials to Europe