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AFRICA: 1750–1914

KEY CONCEPTS

- African trading empires continued to control most parts of eastern and western Africa before the 1850s.
- Moral pressure and changes in the global economy led to the end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade by 1867.
- Industrialism and nationalism fed the desire of European nations for increased influence in Africa by the 1870s.
- New Imperialism reshaped the continent of Africa as European countries began exerting political, economic, and cultural control over their African colonies.
- In the “scramble” for Africa, European nations carved up of the continent into colonial possessions, with only Ethiopia and Liberia remaining independent.
- European imperialism altered Africans’ political, economic, and cultural way of life.

KEY TERMS

- Afrikaners
- Battle of Adowa
- Berlin Conference
- colonialism
- Industrial Revolution
- modernization
- nationalism
- New Imperialism
- palm oil
- “scramble” for Africa
- Sokoto Caliphate
- South African War
- Suez Canal
- trans-Atlantic slave trade
- Zulu

Africa is discussed in depth in *The Earth and Its Peoples*, 4th and 5th eds., Chapters 25 and 27.

THE RISE OF AFRICAN EMPIRES

In the early nineteenth century, changes in trading patterns and population growth, familiar to other parts of Africa, came to the Nguni people of southern Africa. In addition, a severe drought led to increased conflict over grazing and farmlands. The Nguni had traditionally organized themselves in small independent clan groups, but with their society in crisis, a military visionary came forward to reshape southern Africa. In 1818 Shaka created the Zulu kingdom. The Zulu were successful because of their powerful military, which included disciplined drills, hand-to-hand combat, and new, advanced technologies—notably the stabbing spear and oxhide shield. In less than a decade Shaka and the Zulu became a feared force as they seized neighboring grazing and agricultural lands. Areas that were raided lost cattle, and many women and children were enslaved or made homeless, thus creating a large refugee population in southern Africa. Similar to the Mongols' approach, conquered men were integrated into the Zulu army and became fiercely loyal to Shaka. The Zulu did more than any other group in moving central and southern Africa away from clan-based political organization to strong centralized monarchies. In response to the growing Zulu threat many other clans and displaced people united behind charismatic leaders and adopted Zulu military tactics to control growing populations.

In West Africa Islam had been an important religion for hundreds of years, though rural people often resisted conversion and continued their traditional religious practices. Because of this, earlier Islamic empires had tolerated local religion. In 1804 Muslim reformers who wanted a more traditional adherence to Islam called for a jihad, or holy war, to enforce shari'a, Islamic religious law, in western Africa. This call for reform was most strongly accepted in the Hausa states (northern Nigeria). The Islamic reformers challenged the Hausa kings, helped to unite Hausa peasants and devout Muslims against traditional West African elites, and established a caliphate based in the city of Sokoto. The Sokoto Caliphate, as it came to be known, was the largest Islamic empire in West Africa since the Songhai Empire in the late sixteenth century. Sokoto became a center for Islamic learning, with schools and libraries attracting Muslim scholars from all over West Africa. Non-Muslims were allowed to remain in the caliphate if they paid a tax, but traditional religious ceremonies and festivals were suppressed. Those who resisted were killed or enslaved; many of those slaves were sold through the trans-Saharan slave network. Once power had been consolidated, the Sokoto Caliphate controlled much of western Africa for the remainder of the nineteenth century.

AFRICA AND THE SLAVE TRADE

The effect of the trans-Atlantic slave trade on Africa is staggering. It is estimated that over 10 million Africans were enslaved between 1550 and 1800. Eight million of these enslaved African men, women, and

children were sent to the Western Hemisphere, while another 2 million lived in bondage in the Middle East and North Africa. Scholars generally agree that this displacement of people from Africa did not have a dramatic effect on the overall population of sub-Saharan Africa but that some regions, such as parts of western Africa, were greatly affected by the large population losses over many years. They theorize that the ability of some regions to recover from depopulation was directly related to the proportion of women of child-bearing age that were enslaved.

In the late eighteenth century the institution of slavery and the slave trade came under attack. Successful slave revolts in St. Domingue (present-day Haiti) were initially met with brutal repression by European colonial leaders, but the revolts provoked some to question the moral legitimacy of slavery. Several nations banned the international slave trade: Denmark in 1803, Britain in 1807, and the United States in 1808. Abolitionists groups, particularly in Britain, lobbied their governments to outlaw slavery and enforce a ban on slave trading.

By the 1840s, with slavery and the international slave trade having been declared illegal in most of Europe, the British navy began policing the West African coast. Having taken control of Sierra Leone in 1808, the British made that area a colony for liberated slaves. The Royal Navy's aggressive antislavery patrols resulted in the capture of over 1,600 ships and the rescue of 160,000 Africans headed for the slave markets in the Caribbean and South America. As it became more difficult to obtain slaves in West Africa, the slave trade moved farther south and then to East Africa. The trans-Atlantic slave trade joined an already well-established East African slave trade that had existed for decades. A third of the slaves from East Africa were sent to the Americas; the remainder went to North Africa and the Middle East. Because of the high demand for slaves in Cuba and Brazil, the trans-Atlantic slave trade was not completely ended until 1867.

AP Tip

The end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade did not mean that all slavery or slave trade ended. After 1867 thousands of Africans, many from East Africa, would be enslaved over the next several decades. These slaves were shipped to Brazil and Cuba, as well as parts of the Middle East. Ironically, the end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade signaled the growth of slavery in Africa itself. African-led trading companies in West Africa and clove plantations in East Africa enslaved thousands of their fellow Africans throughout the nineteenth century. Slavery in Africa increasingly took on the features of the oppressive slave societies that had developed in the Western Hemisphere. Ethiopia did not finally abolish slavery until 1932. This often-overlooked final chapter of slavery and the slave trade provides interesting background information for a free-response essay that deals with slavery or slave trade.

The slave trade accounted for much of the trade with Africa before 1825, but after that, exports like gold, ivory, and palm oil became dominant. The palm oil trade reshaped the Niger River delta of western Africa. Palm oil, used in Europe and the United States for industrial machines, soap, and candle making, was in high demand during the nineteenth century. Palm oil companies used many slaves to harvest the oil from the interior of West Africa and transport it to the coast. Leaders of these trading companies were like merchant princes, politically and economically controlling port cities and interior lands as well as thousands of slaves. Slaves owned by these trading companies could work and buy their own freedom, though that rarely happened. King Jaja of Opobo, one slave who purchased his freedom, established an independent trading state from the port of Opobo in 1869. By shifting their trade from slaves to raw materials, Africans were able to keep their access to Western industrial imports.

EGYPT AND ETHIOPIA: MODERNIZATION AND WESTERNIZATION

During the nineteenth century both Egypt and Ethiopia began efforts to adopt European technology in order to compete with and defend themselves from Western power. As modernization began, ideas of nationalism, which had been on the rise in Europe, arrived in Africa. Egypt was the first African empire to be reshaped by the modernizing influence of western Europe. The power vacuum created when Napoleon's troops were pushed out of Egypt in 1801 was filled by Muhammad Ali. Ali initially led Albanian soldiers to restore Ottoman imperial control in Egypt. Once in control, Ali began a decades-long process to modernize and Westernize Egypt. Shocked by the ease with which Napoleon had taken control of Egypt in 1798, Ali moved quickly to begin a political, economic, and military restructuring program. European experts were brought in to train and reorganize the Egyptian military, new weapons were imported, and a European-style military training college was opened. Promising young officers were sent to Europe to be trained in the latest techniques of warfare. Additionally, schools were opened to train both army surgeons and military bandleaders. Ali's new army would be built by the conscription of Egyptian peasants. To pay for his modern military, Ali revoked traditional mamluk land privileges and forced Egyptian peasants to grow cotton for export. In other areas Ali attempted to blend Islamic culture with modernization by starting an Islamic newspaper and printing Islamic classics in Arabic. Though an industrial economy was never fully realized, Ali and his family, who retained control after his death, continued to experiment with modernizing the nation. Egypt was linked by railroads, new irrigation canals increased agricultural production, and a postal service was formed. Ali's grandson Ismail Ali continued Egyptian modernization and Westernization efforts in the second half of the nineteenth century, proclaiming, "My country is no longer in Africa, it is in Europe." Egypt's goal of becoming a Western-style power was cut short when the cotton market collapsed after 1870, which led to increasing Egyptian debt and control by European investors.

The ancient kingdom of Ethiopia also began modernizing in the nineteenth century. Partial imperial control was reestablished in the 1830s by Emperor Téwodros II, who began his modernization program with the purchase of European weapons, which he then attempted to manufacture locally, in an effort to update the kingdom's military. When Menelik became emperor in 1889, the integration of his Shoa kingdom created what would constitute modern-day Ethiopia. Under Menelik's rule, Ethiopia continued to industrialize its military and defend against the growing threat of European imperialism. By continually shifting alliances with European powers, Ethiopia was able to import the latest modern weaponry. In 1896 at the Battle of Adowa, Menelik and his army routed Italian troops. Ethiopia was one of only two independent African nations at the end of the nineteenth century.

AP Tip

When students see the term *nationalism*, they often think only about how it affected Western nations. But the building of national identity can also be seen in the actions taken by African nations like Egypt and Ethiopia during the nineteenth century. The construction of the Suez Canal in Egypt in the 1860s and the military defeat of Italian troops by Ethiopia in the 1890s helped foster nationalistic sentiments among their citizens. If a free-response essay deals with nationalism, mention its importance in Africa.

OLD IMPERIALISM VERSUS NEW IMPERIALISM

As the Industrial Revolution emerged in Europe and the United States, Western nations continued expanding their political, economic, and cultural reach. European powers had imperial aspirations before the nineteenth century, and nations like Spain, France, and Britain had built colonial empires in the Americas and Asia over several hundred years. Their goal was to obtain from their colonies the resources for their industries back home.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this colonialism was replaced by what historians refer to as New Imperialism, by which Europeans used their economic and technological power to reshape Africa politically and culturally. New Imperialism sought to bring Africa more fully into the global economy as both a supplier of raw materials and a purchaser of manufactured goods. To accomplish this, Europeans, who until the 1850s were in Africa primarily as traders on the coasts, invaded and set up colonial governments. These governments reorganized Africa to tap the natural resources of various African regions. A variety of motives pushed Europeans to build new imperialistic empires in Africa. Politically, with nationalism on the rise, creating an empire became important to newly industrial powers. When Britain claimed territory in Africa, its rival France followed suit. By the end of the nineteenth century, even smaller European powers like Belgium had staked claims to parts of Africa. Economically, industrialized countries needed to secure a constant

source of raw materials—gold, diamonds, copper, and cotton were among the most significant. Culturally, Europeans wanted to Westernize the parts of Africa they had influence over. Thousands of Christian missionaries came to Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to transfer both religious and cultural ideas. Westerners had begun to equate their advances in technology with the superiority of their cultures. Given this fact, African values were increasingly viewed as a barrier to the development of modern society. As the poet Rudyard Kipling exhorted, Europeans had to embrace the “white man’s burden” and “civilize” Africa, assuming political, economic, and cultural control.

Before the 1870s Europeans had only a few colonial settlements, such as Britain’s Sierra Leone and France’s Algeria. But in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, several western European nations invaded and quickly divided up Africa, an example of New Imperialism commonly referred to as the “scramble” for Africa.

NORTH AFRICA

Egypt seemed an unlikely victim to be swept up in the quest to control Africa. In 1869 the nation completed the Suez Canal, shortening the distance between Europe and Asia and ushering in an age of increased global trade. To many Egyptian elites the canal symbolized the modernization of Egypt and a source of national pride. But projects like the canal, funded by cotton exports and international loans, increased Egypt’s foreign debt. By 1876 over a third of all export earnings went to pay the debt, and Egypt was forced to sell its shares in the Suez Canal to European investors. As Europeans became more involved in financing the debt, they pressured their governments to protect their investment. In the late 1870s both Britain and France used their influence to install Europeans as the minister of public works and minister of finance. In 1882 the Ottoman sultan deposed Ismail Ali, setting off a series of revolts. Britain feared the loss of access to India through the canal and stepped in to “stabilize” the country. The British army arrived in Egypt and began a seventy-year occupation, ruling indirectly through a puppet Egyptian government. Development projects—for example, damming the Nile River—did increase agricultural production in the country, but this primarily benefited the traditional elite at the expense of the peasants. European control brought Western customs that challenged traditional Islam. This was the hallmark of the New Imperialism in Egypt.

WESTERN AND EQUATORIAL AFRICA

European nationalism stimulated the competition for colonial territory and exacerbated a potential for armed conflict. In the 1870s France wanted to increase its access to raw materials in the interior of western Africa by building a railroad. During the same period in equatorial Africa, Belgium’s king Leopold II, convinced by explorers that great wealth could be obtained, began his expansion into the Congo River basin. The French were also interested in the vast territory of the Congo.

To avoid increased tension, German chancellor Otto Von Bismarck called together European diplomats to help redefine their role in Africa. At the Berlin Conference (1884–1885) the nations of Europe

agreed to divide up Africa peacefully. The new rules in the “scramble” for Africa, as it was later called, included no slave trading and, most important, no interference in the territory of other European occupiers. From 1885 to 1900, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Belgium, and Spain consolidated their colonial territory in Africa. By the end of the nineteenth century Ethiopia and Liberia remained the only two independent nations in Africa.

King Leopold II created the Congo Free State after the Berlin Conference, while France and Portugal took control of the remaining territory in equatorial Africa. Unlike western Africa, the Congo region did not have a long history of trade in desirable raw materials. Instead of directly ruling the region, France, Portugal, and Belgium hired private companies to administer their territory and obtain resources that would be profitable. Many of these areas did not have cash crops that could be sold, so Africans were forced to develop new crops to pay the taxes demanded by the private companies. In territories like the Congo Free State, Africans were forced to harvest rubber and transport it out of the jungle themselves. Methods used to coerce people into these new economic activities led to atrocities committed by the private companies to maximize profit. Press coverage of the horrors in the Congo Free State led to the Belgium government taking over King Leopold’s private company in 1908.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Europeans had long been active on the coast of southern Africa. The Dutch East India Company established the Cape Colony in 1652. The British came to control the trading outpost in 1795. Afrikaners, descendants of Dutch settlers on the Cape of Good Hope, moved into the interior throughout the next century. The discovery of diamonds in the 1860s brought other European settlers to the region in search of riches. Seeking to control the diamond territory, British troops launched campaigns into the interior of southern Africa. After defeating the Xhosa in 1878, British troops faced off against the most powerful kingdom in southern Africa, the Zulu, led by King Cetshwayo. The large, well-disciplined Zulu military was initially able to hold its own against the outsiders, but in the end superior European weapons led to British victory and the exile of King Cetshwayo. Zulu land was parceled into farms for white ranchers as Britain expanded its imperial rule, founding Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia.) The British then turned their eyes toward the Afrikaner republics, Transvaal and Orange Free State. The South Africa War (1899–1902) pitted these two early European colonizers, the Afrikaners and the British, against each other. With over 450,000 troops the British were able to defeat the Afrikaners and extend their colonial control in southern Africa. Concerned by the increasing costs of their overseas commitments in Africa as well as other parts of the world, the British created the Union of South Africa, which gave European colonial settlers greater control in administering the empire. Ironically, the recently defeated Afrikaners emerged as the dominant force within the new Union of South Africa. To increase their own power and isolate the indigenous African population, the white South African parliament passed the Native Land Act in 1913. The law placed Africans on reservations and did not allow them to

own land in other parts of the nation. Segregation and racial division increasingly became a part of South Africa in the early twentieth century.

THE EFFECTS OF NEW IMPERIALISM ON AFRICA

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries New Imperialism affected all regions of Africa, but not always in the same way. Responses to colonialism took many forms. Some Africans seized on the opportunity to supplant traditional ruling African elites and found jobs in colonial governments or as soldiers in newly developed colonial armies. Others tried desperately to retain their status and their traditional way of life. Groups such as the Zulu in the south and the Asante in the west continued to challenge imperial control. Most Africans tried living the same way they had before colonial power came, but they found this increasingly difficult. Colonial powers disrupted long-established societies by replacing local leaders with new, professional bureaucrats. Challenges to long-held landowning patterns drastically altered the lives of many rural Africans; in parts of Africa where land was held communally, Western ideas of private property reshaped communities. As they put more territory into agricultural production, European powers held that local ideas on land use inhibited progress. The need to pay taxes to colonial governments forced many Africans into new occupations as miners, construction workers, and field hands. Families were split up as men took work in areas away from their homes. Thousands of Christian missionaries came to Africa during this period to open schools and teach Christian doctrine. In southern and central Africa, Christianity found converts, though for many Africans Christianity was tainted by its connection to the European colonial masters who had brought the religion with them. Missionaries had much less success in areas such as northern and eastern Africa, where Islam had a long tradition. Muslims also expanded their reach into sub-Saharan Africa, appealing to Africans in part because they were unburdened by the New Imperialism.

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. The Ethiopian victory over the Italian invasion in 1896
 - (A) was temporary and led to an Italian protectorate in 1897
 - (B) showed that an African military force could resist Europeans
 - (C) was made possible because Italians succumbed to malaria and smallpox
 - (D) convinced other African leaders to resist with traditional weapons
 - (E) was based on the Ethiopian alliance with Sudan and France