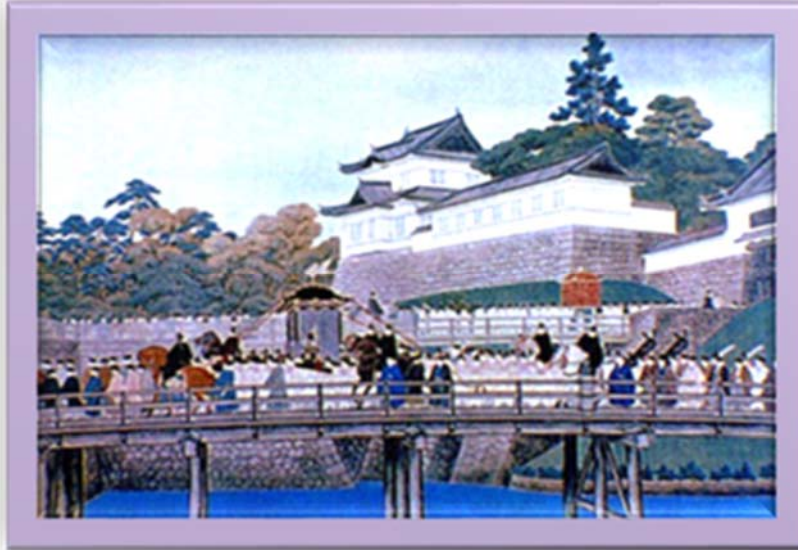


## THE EXPANSION OF IMPERIALISM



### Unit Overview

The world's industrialized nations quickly recognized that they needed raw materials and new markets if they were to continue their economic success. The nations of the West competed to create colonies in the underdeveloped regions of the world and became a force in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This process became known as imperialism. Their desire to control additional territory grew from a strong sense of nationalism as well as an obligation to further European values and religious beliefs. Books and newspapers inspired an interest in distant places and a spirit adventure. Let's see how it all happened.

**STOP:** Answer Section A Questions

## New Nations Upset the Old Balance

In the decades following the American Revolution, many in Great Britain started to feel that colonies were more trouble than they were worth. As a result, by the 1840's, the British government had granted both Canada and Australia a large portion of self-rule. Yet, by the turn of the century, Britain's role in the world had changed, and controlling an empire became more important than ever before.



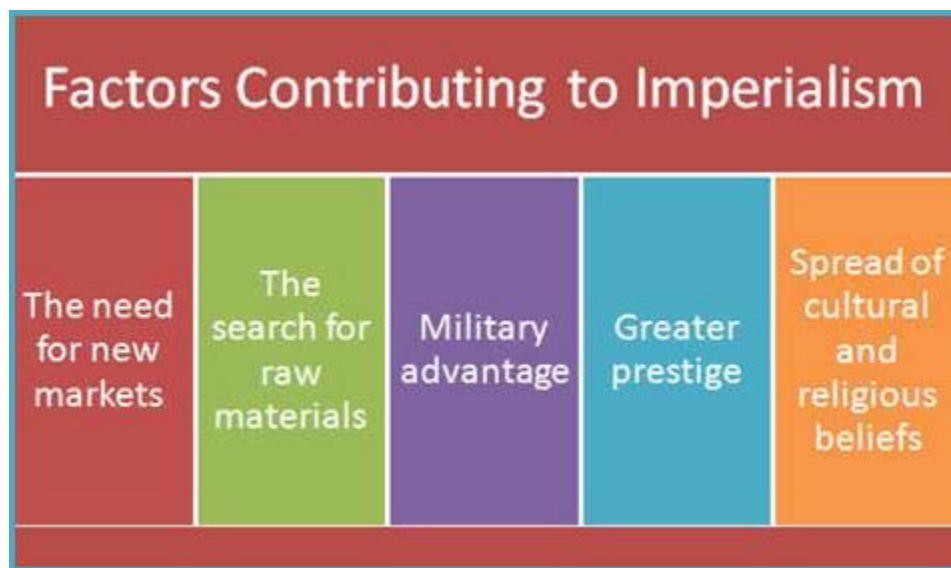
In the first half of the nineteenth century, the nations of Europe attempted to create a balance of power through a system known as the **Concert of Europe**. Statesmen hoped to achieve stability and peace through diplomacy and alliances. However, in the second half of the nineteenth century, this idealistic view was replaced by a philosophy of power politics and violence known as **Realpolitik**. **Camillo di Cavour**, a skilled practitioner of Realpolitik, succeeded in unifying **Italy** while **Otto von Bismarck** created the nation of **Germany** using the same principles. In the era following the Civil War, the **United States** experienced rapid growth and emerged as a contender in the expanding industrial market. These three countries represented a new political and economic challenge for the established nations of Europe. Citizens developed a loyalty to and love for their individual countries which became known as **nationalism**. This new form of national pride encouraged competition and bitter rivalries.

**STOP:** Answer Section B Questions

## The Race for Colonies

The British soon found themselves in an intense struggle for economic supremacy. Countries that had once bought their products willingly were now adding taxes in the form of tariffs in order to protect their own industries. It was necessary for the British to retain their pre-existing markets and to find new ones if they were to remain a world leader. New industries required a variety of **raw materials** that colonies supplied. Businessmen also hoped lands under British rule would provide new markets and new customers for their manufactured goods. Extending the empire also gave Great Britain the ability to protect trade routes which were also necessary if the British were going to avoid an economic downturn.

Britain believed establishing colonies for prestige and profit was the answer to this dilemma. This quest for colonial empires in order to gain political, economic and military power became known as **imperialism**. Other countries followed Great Britain's lead, and the race for colonies began in earnest. Countries that had colonies set out to increase their empires, and countries that had no colonies were determined to acquire them. By 1900, the French had established an empire second only to Great Britain, and the Dutch expanded their control over lands outside of Europe.



Both Portugal and Spain tried to build new empires to replace their former holdings. Russia moved into Central Asia and Siberia while Austria-Hungary exerted its influence in the Balkan states. Belgium and Italy also became competitive for colonies in both Africa and Asia. The Germans invested in building a railroad from Berlin to Baghdad with the hope of establishing a presence

in the Middle East. Japan and the United States also became involved in expansion beyond their borders at this time. The development of the rapid-firing machine gun gave the military forces of the industrialized nations a distinct advantage. **Quinine** provided protection against malaria which had often been fatal for Europeans in the past. Distance was no longer a limiting factor. Steam ships, telegraph lines, railroads and other inventions permitted nations to keep in touch with their colonies in spite of the miles that separated them.

**STOP: Answer Section C Questions**

## Profit was not the Only Motive

However, profit was not the only motive that inspired the race for colonies. European nations believed that additional territory increased their prestige and status. Some countries claimed land that offered very little economic benefit simply to have a greater presence on the world map. Europeans were also convinced that they had an obligation to carry the progress and the achievements of the Industrial Revolution to areas of the world which they considered to be primitive. **Christian missionaries** also pushed for expansion because they believed that European rule was the best way to end practices such as the slave trade.



*Stanley and Livingstone in Africa*

Newspapers, books and poetry also served to draw the average person into the imperialistic view. An American newspaper hired **Henry Stanley** to travel to Africa and look for **David Livingstone**. Livingstone had ventured into the interior of Africa to find evidence against the slave trade and had not been heard from for several years. Stanley found Livingstone, interviewed him, and made headlines around the world. His articles captured the imagination and interest of readers everywhere. Both children and adults were equally fascinated by works of **Joseph Rudyard Kipling** who wrote stories and poems often set in India. Although Kipling's writings sparked a true spirit of adventure, they also promoted an image of European superiority and the concept that the European ways were best.

**STOP: Answer Section D Questions**

Timeline of Events	
1842	Treaty of Nanking (Nanjing)
1853	Commodore Perry opens Japan to trade
1867	Diamonds discovered in South Africa
1868	Meiji Era begins in Japan
1879	Belgium claims the Congo region of Africa
1885	Berlin Conference on Africa
1898	Spanish-American War
1899	United States arranges the Open Door Policy Boer War
1904	Russo-Japanese War
1914	Opening of the Panama Canal

## The Scramble for Africa

The nations of Western Europe as well as the United States and Japan were determined to exert their power and influence. As a result, imperialism changed life and altered the environment on almost every continent. Some of the most intense competition for colonies occurred in **Africa**. In 1875, Europeans controlled ten percent of the continent. Twenty-five years later, ninety percent of Africa was under some form of colonial rule. The struggle intensified in 1879 when Henry Stanley returned to Africa and claimed much of the interior for **King Leopold II** of **Belgium**. Suddenly, the tiny nation controlled an area that was



eighty times larger than the country itself and referred to its new acquisition as the **Belgian Congo**.

Not to be outdone, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany and Britain hurried to carve African territory for themselves. To prevent a war over colonial interests in this region, European countries sent representatives to Berlin in 1885 to establish ground rules for their presence in Africa. As a result, nations could claim land in Africa by simply sending troops to control strategic locations. It is also important to note that no African leaders were invited to participate in these discussions. The map pictured here shows the impact of this policy.



*The Partition of Africa in 1914*

Although Ethiopia and Liberia remained independent, the rest of Africa was quickly divided among the nations of Western Europe. Some industrialists thought that Africans would soon be purchasing goods manufactured in Europe in large quantities. However, most of these sales never materialized since the tropical climate simply made European clothes impractical. The real financial benefit came from the abundance of natural resources and commercial plantations. **Cocoa, rubber and palm oil** were grown as cash crops and significant exports. The French controlled **West Africa**, and the British managed the land near the **Suez Canal** to protect their access to **India**. The Belgian Congo contained massive

deposits of **tin, copper and manganese**, but these would seem small in comparison to the discovery of **gold and diamonds** in **South Africa**. It was the domination of the southern tip of the continent that would prove invaluable.

When the British took control of the **Cape of Good Hope** in 1806, a small group of Dutch settlers, who called themselves **Boers**, were already living there. They resented British authority and wanted their own government. Large numbers of Boers made their way further into the interior on a journey called the **Great Trek**. They came into conflict with the Africans or Zulus, and the two groups fought for several years. After defeating the Zulus, the Boers set up three small states named **Transvaal, the Orange Free State and Natal**. Within a short time, the British annexed Natal but permitted the other two countries to remain independent.



*Diamonds Mined in South Africa*

In 1867, Britain's attention was directed toward a new venture. Diamonds were discovered on a farm near the village of **Kimberly** located on the border of the Orange Free State. British miners made their way to the Boer lands in ever-increasing numbers, especially after gold was discovered in the Transvaal in 1886. Tensions escalated, and the Boers declared war against the British in 1899. Although the Boers were outnumbered, they were successful in their use of guerrilla tactics against the British army. The British struck back by destroying Boer farms and food supplies, and the Boers had little choice but to make peace. In an effort to prevent further turmoil, the British permitted the Dutch-speaking

farmers to keep their own language and helped them rebuild their farms. Native Africans, whose farms had also been destroyed, were ignored. Soon the Kimberly diamond fields, controlled by **Cecil Rhodes**, were producing ninety percent of the world's diamonds.

**STOP: Answer Section E Questions**

## Spheres of Influence in China

When the nineteenth century began, **China** was a prosperous, self-sufficient country. In spite of its growing population, the Chinese developed an efficient agricultural system. China believed that products manufactured in Europe and the United States were inferior. As a result, the Chinese only permitted European ships at the port city of **Canton** (Guangzhou) and had little interest in what the outsiders had to offer. Europeans were determined to find something the Chinese would buy. Unfortunately, the product proved to be **opium**. Made from the poppy plant, this highly-addictive drug created a major problem.

The Chinese repeatedly requested that the nations of Europe stop the opium trade, but Europe ignored these pleas. In an attempt to use force, China began the **Opium War** but was quickly defeated by the superior power of the British navy. The **Treaty of Nanking (Nanjing)** ended the war but humiliated China. China was required to open four additional cities as trading ports and to pay for any opium that was destroyed during the war. British citizens who did business in china were granted **extraterritorial rights** which meant they did not have to obey Chinese laws.





*Signing the Treaty of Nanking*

Problems continued to mount for the weakening Chinese government. For example, the agricultural system could no longer keep up with the ever-expanding population. Meanwhile, European countries as well as Japan established **spheres of influence**. These were areas of the country where a specific foreign nation controlled the business interests and resources. The United States became increasingly concerned that it would be shut out of the vast Chinese market. Therefore, the Americans proposed the **Open Door Policy** in 1899. As a result, China was not divided into traditional colonies, and all nations were welcome as traders. In spite of this practice, the Chinese were still at the mercy of foreign influence.

**STOP:** Answer Section F Questions

## **Japan Joins the Empire-builders**

As the search for new markets and trading partners continued, **Japan** captured the attention of Europe and North America by 1850. Having enjoyed a long period of peace and stability, the Japanese had little interest in establishing contact with the West. Dutch traders were permitted to maintain an outpost near the city of **Nagasaki**, but the Japanese response was limited. This picture changed in 1853 when **Commodore Matthew Perry** arrived with his American fleet and modern weapons. The Japanese knew they were not strong enough to drive out these forces so they quickly agreed to a treaty. The Japanese feared their independence

would soon be lost so they formed a plan to combat the foreign threat. A group of powerful new leaders overthrew the government and named a fifteen-year old boy **Emperor Mutsuhito**. His regime became known as the **Meiji** or Enlightened Rule, and its goal was the modernization of Japan.



*Commodore Matthew Perry*

Dramatic changes came quickly to Japan during the Meiji Era. Feudalism was abolished, a new constitution was adopted and Japan sent representatives to industrialized countries to study their progress. With government support, Japan built factories, increased coal production and re-negotiated trade agreements in their favor. They earned money from the sale of traditional goods like silk and financed their industrialization with the profits. Unlike China, Japan did not owe large sums of money to European and American bankers. The new leadership also focused on a strong military. They patterned their navy after the British fleet and the army after the German model. Their success was apparent in the **Russo-Japanese War** in 1904. Japan defeated Russia in this series of battles, and Japan was able to create a sphere of influence in **Manchuria**, a Chinese province. The

Japanese quickly followed the European example of empire-building as a means to access natural resources and new markets.

## Imperialism Goes Global

Imperialism reached all corners of the world and became global in nature. The Industrial Revolution created a demand for raw materials that drew attention to **Latin America** as well as Asia and Africa. Bolivian tin, Chilean copper and Argentine beef caught the attention of industrialized nations. As Latin America increased its output of these products, it realized it needed improved transportation in the form of railroad lines and better communication links to be profitable. South American nations borrowed heavily from European and American banks to finance these improvements. As a result, foreigners were soon able to take over key mines and industries. The United States, Latin America's largest investor, feared European nations would soon take over weakened governments in this region and used the **Monroe Doctrine** to restrict their influence. **The Spanish-American War** gave the United States control over Cuba as well as Puerto Rico and offered America the opportunity to assert its authority.



*USS Ronald Reagan Docking in Guam*

There was also a fierce competition to control islands in the Pacific Ocean. An abundance of natural resources stirred an interest in these territories, but their value as **coal stations** for steam ships made them indispensable. The settlement of the Spanish-American War awarded **Guam** to the United States; Britain, France, and Germany established a presence there as well. By 1900, nearly all the Pacific islands had lost their independence. Even the most remote parts of the world became fair game for imperialists. The early twentieth century produced a number of explorers who raced to Antarctica to claim land for their respective countries.

**STOP: Answer Section G Questions.**

## What Does It All Mean?

Economic gain, national pride and a desire to spread European values fueled the quest for more territory and the rise of imperialism. The decisions made by Western nations in the late nineteenth century would prove to have serious consequences in the twentieth century. The competition for control of natural resources led to increased tension, the threat of war and a disregard for the environment. Millions of Asians, Africans and Latin Americans were dominated by foreign powers which controlled both the political and economic aspects of their lives. How would the indigenous people of the non-industrialized nations react? Would the ambitions of wealthy nations eventually lead to a major war? The decisions and events of the twentieth century were shaped by these questions.

## Additional Activities and Resources



[Main Points Worksheet](#)

[The Meiji Restoration of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Japan Article with Quiz](#)

[Writing Exercises: Imperialism I](#)