

Partition and scramble of africa essay



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INTRODUCTION It can be referred to as a period whereby European powers colonised, invaded, occupied and annexed African territories in a very rapid and unprecedented manner, even though there was little interest in Africa up to the 1870's. In fact, up to 1880 Europeans ruled merely 10% of the African continent. Yet within 30 years, by 1914, European nations will have claimed all of Africa except Liberia (a small territory of freed slaves from the United States) and Abyssinia (Ethiopia), which had successfully held off Italian invaders at the battle of Adowa in 1896.

The partitioning of Africa was seen as a means of easing tensions between European states which was high in the late 19th century and avoid a full blown out war in Europe over Africa. The Berlin conference was held in 1884-5 as a way of establishing trade and borders of territories. The dominating states at the conference were Germany, Britain, France and Portugal. Africa was divided into 50 colonies without any regard for cultural and linguistic societies that were already established there which has led to conflicts between the independent African states after World War II.

There were no representatives for the African states at the conference.

THEORIES OF IMPERIALISM Conservative theory states that imperialism is necessary to maintain existing social order in more developed countries. In addition to secure trade markets, maintain employment and capital exports. Supporters of this theory are Disraeli, Rhodes and Kipling. Liberal theory states that imperialism is a policy choice and not an inevitable consequence of capitalism. Increase concentration of wealth in the affluent nations leads to under consumption for the majority of people.

This can be solved by increase in income of the majority of the population. Supporters of this theory are Hobson and Angell. Marxist theory states that imperialism arises because of increased concentration of wealth leads to under consumption however since the state represents the capitalist interest it is not possible to reduce under consumption through liberal strategies. According to Lenin the world would be completely divided up and the rich countries would then fight over the re-division of the world. Supporters of this theory are Karl Marx and Lenin.

Political theory states that imperialism is simply a manifestation of the balance of power and is the process by which nations try to achieve a favourable change in the status quo. Supporters of this theory are Morgenthall and Cohen. Social psychological theory states that imperialism is an object less expansion a pattern simply learnt from the behaviour of other nations and institutionalised into the domestic political process of a state by a state by a warrior class. Supporter of this theory is Schumpeter.

THE MOTIVES OF THE SCRAMBLE AND PARTITION OF AFRICA The need for supplementary sources of raw materials. The emergence of mass society brought improved standard of living for the lower and middle classes, which composed the great majority of the population. The rise in real wages accompanied by the decline of various costs for consumers led to an increase in mass consumption. Moreover, the expansion of new transportation systems, such as automobiles and railroads, allowed the populations to move and enjoy new forms of leisure.

Consequently, the production of those equipments required tremendous and reliable supplies of raw materials such as rubber and steel. The First Industrial Revolution had already led western industrialists to exploit the European natural resources. Furthermore, products such as rubber were only available abroad. Consequently, necessary raw materials were imported from Africa. The desire to explore markets abroad. Industrials needed to investigate the wide range of potential markets abroad because the western market was subject to fierce competition between the different industries.

Producers benefited from African people who had been educated in western universities and who lived the western way of life. These Westernised Africans represented perfect sources of potential purchasers because they did not only buy western artefacts to imitate western customs for social advancement or prestige but they also publicized the western way of life to other potential buyers. Therefore, New Imperialism was backed up by industrialists who, while extending the limits of their markets, promoted the political expansion of western empires.

The wish to realize new investments in Africa. Industrial bourgeois were constantly searching for lucrative investments, ranging from the exploitation of natural resources, such as farming or mining extraction, to production of goods, such as electric appliances, or to services, such as legal counselling. The new businesses in Africa provided huge returns because the western consumers demanded more and more items that required to be made with foreign materials.

The industrialization revolution stimulated the intensification of economic relations between the West and the Africa that increased industrialists' greed and, as a consequence, cemented their desire to expand western possessions in Africa to make more money. Therefore, the aggregate investments abroad were one of the economic levies that amplified the expansion in Africa. In addition there was the idea of "civilizing" people in Africa. This was a religious motive for many Christian missionaries, in attempt to save the souls of the "uncivilized" people, and of the idea that Christians and the White Man were morally superior.

Most of the missionaries that supported imperialism did so because they felt the only true religion was their own. At times imperialism did help the people of the countries being invaded because the missionaries ended up stopping some of the slavery in some areas. Therefore, Europeans claimed that they were only there because they wanted to protect the weaker tribal groups they conquered. The missionaries and other leaders suggested that they should stop such practices as cannibalism, child marriage, and other "savage" things.

This humanitarian ideal was described in poems such as the "White Man's Burden" and other literature. Political motives were based on a nation's desire to gain power, to compete with other European countries, to expand territory, to exercise military force, to gain prestige by winning colonies, and to boost national pride and security. Germany and Italy and France too after its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War were convinced that Britain's status depended on colonies and naval power. Therefore a race to empire developed as European nations competed against each other for colonies,

especially for areas that provided ports and coaling stations for their competitive navies. Not wanting to appear weak and having no status, the race was on to acquire an empire. After the creation of a unified Germany, there was no room left in Europe for expansion. Britain, France and Germany were in an intricate political dance, trying to maintain their dominance, and an empire would secure it. France, which had lost two provinces to Germany in 1870 looked to Africa to gain more territory.

Britain looked towards Egypt and the control of the Suez canal as well as pursuing territory in gold rich southern Africa. Germany, under the rule of Chancellor Bismarck, had come late to the idea of overseas colonies, but was now fully convinced of their worth. Africa, especially the western regions, was known as the 'White Man's Grave' because of the danger of two diseases: malaria and yellow fever. During the eighteenth century only one in ten Europeans sent out to the continent by the Royal African Company survived.

Six of the ten would have died in their first year. In 1817 two French scientists, Pierre-Joseph Pelletier and Joseph Bienaime Caventou, extracted quinine from the bark of the South American cinchona tree. It proved to be the solution to malaria; With this medical advances Europeans could now survive the ravages of the disease in Africa. During the nineteenth century barely a year went by without a European expedition into Africa. The boom in exploration was triggered to a great extent by the creation of the African Association by wealthy Englishmen in 1887.

As the century moved on, the goal of the European explorer changed, and rather than travelling out of pure curiosity they started to record details of markets, goods, and resources for the wealthy philanthropists who financed their trips. CONCLUSION The scramble and partition of Africa was primarily fuelled by economic reasons. Indeed, social causes, such as Social Darwinism or the spread of Christianity, were only justifications to appease the African continent . They were simply means to expand economic returns without letting appear the real objectives and with the aim to prevent accusations of harsh colonialism.

Furthermore, Darwin explains that the fittest survives and overcomes the weakest but he does not assert that the fittest could have the slightest obligation to take advantage of the weakest. Furthermore, political and military causes were also justifications to legitimate the countries' expansion in the eyes of the other nations on the international stage. New western empires wanted to avoid political tensions at home, such as in Europe, and between the colonies. Indeed, the European colonies in Africa generated relatively few tensions between the colonial powers.

Moreover, those colonies were primarily aimed at commercial activities. Actually, given the immensity of the territories, they supported few troops and that might was mainly to police the area. As regards the technological causes, such as medical or weaponry breakthroughs, they were valuable advantages but did not constitute the principal objective of the scramble.

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