CHAPTER 24

The Age of Imperialism, 1870–1914

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Motives and Methods of the New Imperialism
   A. Economic Motivations
      1. The desire for new markets and raw materials fueled the new imperialism.
         a) Britain looked to India as a market for textiles and other industrial products.
         b) King Leopold II of Belgium gained huge profits from rubber in the Congo.
         c) Cecil Rhodes became wealthy from gold and diamond mines in southern Africa.
      2. The direct connection between economic motivations and the establishment of political
         control is not always clear.
         a) Britain already enjoyed economic and political dominance of India and southern
            Africa before imperialist domination was established.
         b) For Germany, establishment of colonies in Africa and the Pacific did not make
            economic sense; these colonies cost German taxpayers millions.
   B. Domestic Politics and National Rivalries
      1. A more convincing explanation of imperialism is national rivalries and domestic
         politics; Britons, Germans, Frenchmen, and others identified their national pride with
         colonial possessions.
      2. The French government took Tunisia to thwart an Italian takeover, just as the British
         occupation in 1882 denied French influence in Egypt.
      3. Domestic politics pushed imperialism for Germans in Africa and the Pacific, and
         Italians in Africa.
   C. Christian Missions
      1. Churches and Christian missionaries played a vital role in imperialist expansion,
         establishing footholds before official colonial control was declared.
      2. Thousands and eventually millions of Asians and Africans embraced Christianity,
         representing a grave loss to native cultures and religions.
      3. David Livingstone, a well-known missionary, spent his life spreading the gospel,
         healing the sick, and fighting European exploitation in Africa.
      4. Despite their defense of natives, missionaries provided incentive to purchase European
         manufactured goods and (often unwittingly) encouraged economic links.
   D. “The White Man’s Burden”
      1. “The white man’s burden” meant imperialists firmly believed in Western superiority in
         civilization, culture, and race, assuming that non-Europeans would be grateful to be
         “uplifted” and assimilated into European economic systems and values.
      2. This paternalism did not respect the humanity of others, resulting in oppression,
         destruction of traditions, and hypocrisy because the system claimed to protect and
         nurture native peoples but, in reality, it served European economic and political
         interests.
   E. The Importance of Technology
      1. European domination would have been impossible without the technological advances
         of the Second Industrial Revolution, especially communications, transportation, and
         medicine.
a) The telegraph helped imperial administrators stifle resistance and revolt.
b) Railroads and steamship lines made extraction of raw materials and penetration of European military control possible.
c) The commercial production of quinine helped imperialists fight off the new diseases, like malaria, that they encountered in Africa and Asia.

II. The Scramble for Africa

A. Settler Colonies in South and North Africa
   1. Historians differentiate between settler colonies, where colonists (including entire families) settled permanently, and colonies where administrators lived temporarily and then returned to Europe.
   2. Settler colonies were usually located in temperate regions such as Argentina, the United States, and Australia.
   3. Settler colonies in Africa included the Dutch farmers (Boers) and English in South Africa (10 percent European) and the French in Algeria along Africa’s Mediterranean coast (40 percent European).

B. The Belgian Congo
   1. The king of Belgium, Leopold II, formed the Congo Free State in 1885 to extract vast riches in rubber, ivory, and palm oil with a minimum of expense.
   2. Leopold’s brutal methods appalled Europeans, so he turned it over to Belgium in 1908.

C. The Berlin Conference and German Colonies
   1. German chancellor Bismarck called the Berlin Conference (1884) to open the Congo to European trade and entered “the scramble for Africa,” infuriating the British.
   2. German colonialism gained control over some Pacific islands, Southwest Africa, Togo, Cameroon, East Africa, and Southwest Africa.
   3. Bismarck attempted to administer the colonies through private chartered companies, but in the 1890s, the German government took over the colonies directly, using genocide, especially after the Herero Revolt of 1905–1907.

D. The Boer War
   1. In the brutal Boer War (1899–1902), Dutch farmers, or Boers, lost to the British, who wanted to mine the gold and diamond mines on their land.
   2. Despite their defeat, the Boers gained broad autonomy and home rule.

III. The British Raj in India

A. Commerce and Trade
   1. At first, British interests in India were commercial; the British East India Company had one aim, which was profit.
   2. British state institutions gradually moved in to protect the safety of British citizens and future trade there.
   3. The ideological basis of British rule in India was contradictory; liberals wanted Indian self-rule, but British administrators were hostile to Indian traditions.

B. The Sepoy Rebellion
   1. The Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, which the British brutally suppressed, fundamentally transformed British rule by disbanding the East India Company, transferring control to the British crown, and increasing the size of the British army in India.
   2. Official British policy aimed to avoid interference in religious matters, but the British administrators did not understand the complexities of religious relations in India between the traditional religions worshipping many gods and the Muslim monotheism.

C. The Jewel in the Crown
   1. The British Raj in India continued to expand, and ambitious young men made their careers in India; their children were called Anglo-Indians.
   2. The racially defined colonial rule helped bring about the Indian National Congress in 1885, which worked to free India from British rule.
3. India was known as the jewel in the crown of the British Empire because of the alien, exotic, exquisite images, which were created by Kipling’s *Jungle Book* and *Kim*.

4. In 1877, Queen Victoria took the title of empress of India.

D. British Order and Indian Culture

1. British liberals recognized that they would have to oppose the popular will to introduce their ideas of culture and standards of hygiene.

2. The gendering of British colonialism differentiated between the “manly” bravery, decisiveness, and energy that the British portrayed and the “martial races” such as the Sikhs, and the passive, backward stereotypes attributed to the “effeminate” Bengalis and Indian masses.

3. British rule unified the subcontinent, created an educated Indian elite, and provided a common means of communication with the English language.

4. Economically, British rule deindustrialized India, but the British also connected India to the world economy.

IV. Imperialism and the Muslim World

A. Russian Expansion

1. Russians had more contact with Muslims than any other Europeans, and Russian expansion occurred in Central Asia.

2. Central Asia exerted a powerful influence on Russian artists and ethnographers.

3. Central Asia remained impoverished, remote, and largely untouched by Russian or Western influences, and the Russian presence in Central Asia ended up provoking the development of local nationalisms aimed against the imperial power.

B. The Ottoman Empire

1. The Ottoman Empire’s influence over the Balkan Peninsula was considerably reduced throughout the nineteenth century, leaving it helpless to oppose the widening Russian and European influence.

C. Muslims, Christians, and Zionists

1. Theodor Herzl founded the Jewish nationalist movement of Zionism that aimed to establish a Jewish state in ancient Palestine (Eretz Israel).

2. Neither local Muslims nor the Ottoman authorities were concerned about the small numbers of Zionists in Jerusalem until the 1920s.

3. Arab nationalists were at first anti-Ottoman, not anti-Zionist.

V. The Far East

A. The French in Indochina

1. French expansion into Southeast Asia started in the 1850s, and in 1862, a treaty forced local rulers in Indochina to concede religious toleration to Christians.

2. The French in Indochina were able to extract raw silk, rubber, and teak wood, but French taxpayers paid heavily for colonial ventures.

3. Unlike the British who brought their families, French administrators in Indochina took local wives and mistresses, whom they abandoned when the men returned to Europe.

4. The French ambitiously hoped to assimilate their colonial subjects and to make them into genuine Frenchmen, but racial prejudices and resistance from native peoples interfered with this goal.

B. The Dutch in Indonesia

1. In contrast to the French, the Dutch in Indonesia were not interested in “civilizing” the natives, so Dutch colonial control left few traces in independent Indonesia.

2. Between 1830 and 1870, the Dutch West Indies produced profits for the Netherlands, but after 1870, Dutch trade with the Dutch West Indies declined.

C. Concessions in China
1. After defeat in the Opium Wars, the corrupt and weak Chinese Qing dynasty endured unequal treaties that imposed trade “concessions” favorable to Europeans at treaty ports.

2. By the twentieth century, foreign influence in the form of concessions, naval bases, and trade privileges compromised Chinese sovereignty.

3. Christian missionaries set up schools and health clinics in China; their teachings came into conflict with Chinese customs.

4. The Chinese Boxer Rebellion (1900) was quickly put down by imperialist powers.

D. The Westernization of Japan

1. Japan was successful in using Western models to their own advantage against the Western powers, carrying out its own administrative, military, and economic reforms in the Meiji Restoration.

2. The Japanese shocked the world by winning the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), resulting in the Russian Revolution (1905) and Japan formally annexing Korea (1910).

VI. Consequences and Critics

A. A Global Economy

1. The global economy brought raw materials (for example, cotton) from the colonies to Europe, and exported manufactured European goods (for example, cloth) to the colonies.

2. Colonies became economically dependent on European industry, and some were deindustrialized to ensure that profits flowed to Europe.

3. Europeans reshaped colonial economies to meet the needs of Western imperialist powers, including supplies of tea, sugar, chocolate, bananas, guano, rubber, etc.

B. Indigenous Resistance

1. Indigenous resistance was useless against European technological superiority (machine guns), so native peoples resisted by ignoring the orders of colonial administrators, avoiding taxes, shunning European culture, wearing native clothing, and speaking native languages.

2. The most effective resistance was using European education about constitutional government and political rights to expose the hypocrisy of imperialism, such as pointing to the vast contrast between colonial official luxury and native poverty or in Gandhi’s organizing of Indian residents in South Africa to demand their rights (1890s).

C. Imperialism and European Culture

1. Rudyard Kipling, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and Pierre Loti wrote literature that reflected imperialistic themes; in 1891, Loti was elected to the French Academy.

2. International exhibitions in Paris in 1867 and 1900 aimed to educate the populace about the colonies and promote European superiority.

3. The interests of imperialism were also evident in the visual arts, and images in advertising drew on imperialist themes.

D. Capitalism and Imperialism

1. Imperialism generated criticism of its cruelty toward subject populations and the ultimate danger to populations in the imperial countries.

2. John A. Hobson argued in *Imperialism* (1902) that Britain’s nondemocratic rule over colonies was hypocritical, dangerous, and a threat to democracy at home.

3. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin’s *Imperialism* portrayed it as part of a larger ill: capitalism.