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# Imperialism and Imperial Rule

The ruling of alien peoples and other lands by Europeans was the starkest evidence that they ran the world. In spite of continuing argument about what imperialism was and is, it seems helpful to start with the simple notion of direct and formal overlordship, blurred though its boundaries with other forms of power over the non-European world may be. This neither raises nor answers questions about causes or motives, on which much time, ink and thought have been spent. From the outset different and changing causes were at work, and not all the motives involved were unavowable or self-deceiving. Imperialism was not the manifestation of only one age, for it has gone on all through history; nor was it peculiar to Europe's relations with non-Europeans overseas, for imperial rule had advanced overland as well as across the seas and some Europeans have ruled others and some non-Europeans have ruled Europeans.

None the less, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the word came to be particularly associated with European expansion, and the direct domination of Europeans over the rest of the world had by then become much more obvious than ever before, especially because to them was added the power of industrialization and capitalist markets. Although the American revolutions had suggested that the European empires built up over the preceding two centuries were in decline, in the next hundred years European imperialism was carried much further and became more effective than ever before. This happened in two distinguishable phases, and one running down to about 1870 can conveniently be considered first. Some of the old imperial powers then continued to enlarge their empires impressively; such were Russia, France and Great Britain. Others stood still or found theirs reduced; these were the Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese.

The Russian expansion has at first sight something in common both with the American experience of filling up the North American continent and dominating its weaker neighbours, and with that of the British in India, but was in fact a very special case. To the west Russia confronted matured, established European states where there was little hope of successful territorial

gain. The same was only slightly less true of expansion into the Turkish territories of the Danubian regions, for here the interests of other powers were always likely to come into play against Russia and check her in the end. She was much freer to act to the south and eastwards; in both directions the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century brought great acquisitions. A successful war against Persia (1826–8) led to the establishment of Russian naval power on the Caspian as well as gains of territory in Armenia. In central Asia an almost continuous advance into Turkestan and towards the central oases of Bukhara and Khiva culminated in the annexation of the whole of Transcaspia in 1881. In Siberia, aggressive expansion was followed by the exaction of the left bank of the Amur down to the sea from China and the founding in 1860 of Vladivostok, the Russian Far Eastern capital. Soon after, Russia liquidated its commitments in America by selling Alaska to the United States; this seemed to show it sought to be an Asian and Pacific, but not an American, power.

The other two dynamic imperial states of this era, France and Great Britain, expanded overseas. Yet many of the British gains were made at the expense of France. The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars proved in this respect to be the final round of the great colonial Anglo-French contest of the eighteenth century. As in 1714 and 1763, many of Great Britain's acquisitions at a victorious peace in 1815 were intended to reinforce maritime strength. Malta, St Lucia, the Ionian islands, the Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius and Trincomalee were all kept for this reason. Soon afterwards, steamships began to appear in the Royal Navy and the situation of bases had to take coaling into account; this now led to further acquisitions. In 1839, an internal upheaval in the Ottoman empire gave the British the opportunity to seize Aden, a base of strategic importance on the route to India, and others were to follow. No power could successfully challenge such action after Trafalgar. It was not that resources did not exist elsewhere which, had they been assembled, could have wrested naval supremacy from Great Britain. But to do so would have demanded a huge effort. No other nation operated either the number of ships or possessed the bases which could make it worth while to challenge this thalassocracy. There were also advantages to other nations in having the world's greatest commercial power undertake a policing of the seas from which all could benefit.

Naval supremacy guarded the trade which gave the British colonies participation in the fastest-growing commercial system of the age. Already before the American Revolution, British policy had been more encouraging to commercial enterprise than the Spanish or French. Thus the old colonies themselves had grown in wealth and prosperity and the later Dominions were to benefit. On the other hand, settlement colonies went out of fashion

in London after the American Revolution; they were seen mainly as sources of trouble and expense. Yet Great Britain was the only European country sending out new settlers to existing colonies in the early nineteenth century, and those colonies sometimes drew the mother country into yet further extensions of territorial rule over alien lands.

In some acquisitions (notably in South Africa) there can be seen at work a new concern about strategy and communication with Asia. This is a complicated business. No doubt American independence and the Monroe doctrine diminished the attractiveness of the western hemisphere as a region of imperial expansion, but the origins of a shift of British interest to the East can be seen before 1783, in the opening up of the South Pacific and in a growing Asian trade. War with the Netherlands, when it was a French satellite, subsequently led to new British enterprise in Malaya and Indonesia. Above all, there was the steadily deepening British involvement in India. By 1800 the importance of the Indian trade was already a central axiom of British commercial and colonial thinking. By 1850, it has been urged, much of the rest of the empire had only been acquired because of the strategic pull exercised by India. By then, too, the extension of British control inside the subcontinent itself was virtually complete. It was and remained the centrepiece of British imperialism.

This had hardly been expected or even foreseeable. In 1784 the institution of 'Dual Control' had been accompanied by decisions to resist further acquisition of Indian territory; the experience of American rebellion had reinforced the view that new commitments were to be avoided. Yet there was a continuing problem, for through its revenue management the East India Company's affairs inevitably became entangled in native administration and politics. This made it more important than ever to prevent excesses by its individual officers, such as had been tolerable in the early days of private trading; slowly, agreement emerged that the government of India was of interest to Parliament not only because it might be a great source of patronage, but also because the government in London had a responsibility for the good government of Indians.

The background against which Indian affairs were considered was therefore changing. Across two centuries, the awe and amazement inspired by the Mughal court in the first merchants to reach it had given way rapidly to contempt for what was seen on closer acquaintance as backwardness, superstition and inferiority. But now there were signs of another change. While Clive, the victor of Plassey, never learnt to speak with readiness in any Indian tongue, Warren Hastings, the first governor-general of India, strove to get a chair of Persian set up at Oxford, and encouraged the introduction of the first printing-press to India and the making of the first fount

of a vernacular (Bengali) type. There was greater appreciation of the complexity and variety of Indian culture. In 1789 there began to be published in Calcutta the first journal of oriental studies, *Asiatick Researches*. Meanwhile, at the more practical level of government, Company judges were already enjoined to follow Islamic law in family cases involving Muslims, while the revenue authority of Madras both regulated and funded Hindu temples and festivals. From 1806 Indian languages were taught at the East India Company's college, Haileybury.

The periodic renewals of the Company's charter took place, therefore, in the light of changing influences and assumptions about Anglo-Indian relationships. Meanwhile, government's responsibilities grew. In 1813 charter renewal strengthened London's control further, and abolished the Company's monopoly of trade with India. By then, the wars with France had already led to the extension of British power over south India through annexation and the negotiation of treaties with native rulers which secured control of their foreign policy. By 1833, when the charter was again renewed, the only important block of territory not ruled directly or indirectly by the Company was in the north-west. The annexation of the Punjab and Sind followed in the 1840s, and with their paramountcy established in Kashmir the British held sway over virtually the whole subcontinent.

The Company had by then ceased to be a commercial organization and had become a government. The 1833 charter took away its trading functions (not only those with India but the monopoly of trade with China) and it was confined to an administrative role; in sympathy with current thinking, Asian trade was henceforth to be free trade. The way was open to the consummation of many real and symbolic breaks with India's past and the final incorporation of the subcontinent in a modernizing world. The name of the Mughal emperor was removed from the coinage, but it was more than a symbol that Persian ceased to be the legal language of record and justice. This step not only marked the advance of English as the official language (and therefore of English education), but also disturbed the balance of forces between Indian communities. Anglicized Hindus would prove to do better than most Muslims. In a subcontinent so divided in so many ways, the adoption of English as the language of administration was complemented by the important decision in principle to provide primary education through instruction given in English, few though the Indians would be who received it.

At the same time an enlightened despotism exercised by successive governors-general began to impose material and institutional improvement. Roads and canals were built and the first railway followed in 1853. Legal codes were introduced. English officials for the Company's service

began to be trained specially in the college established for this purpose. The first three universities in India were founded in 1857. There were other educational structures, too; as far back as 1791 a Scotsman had founded a Sanskrit college at Benares (Varanasi), the Lourdes of Hinduism. Much of the transformation which India was gradually undergoing arose not from the direct work of government but from the increasing freedom with which these and other agencies were allowed to operate. From 1813 the arrival of missionaries (the Company had hitherto kept them out) gradually built up another constituency at home with a stake in what happened in India – often to the embarrassment of official India. Two philosophies, in effect, were competing to make government act positively. Utilitarians looked for the promotion of happiness, evangelical Christians to the salvation of souls. Both were arrogantly sure they knew what was best for India. Both subtly changed British attitudes as time passed.

The coming of the steamship had its influence, too. It brought India nearer. More Englishmen and Scotsmen began to live and make their careers there. This gradually transformed the nature of the British presence. The comparatively few officers of the eighteenth-century Company had been content to live the lives of exiles, seeking rewards in their commercial opportunities and relaxation in a social life sometimes closely integrated with that of the Indians. They often lived much in the style of Indian gentlemen, some of them taking to Indian dress and food, some to Indian wives and concubines. Reform-minded officials, intent on the eradication of the backward and barbaric in native practice (and in such practices as female infanticide and *suttee* they had good cause for concern), missionaries with a creed to preach which was corrosive of the whole structure of Hindu or Muslim society and, above all, the Englishwomen who arrived to make homes in India while their husbands worked there, often did not approve of the old ways of John Company's men. They changed the temper of the British community, which drew more and more apart from the natives, more and more convinced of a moral superiority which sanctioned the ruling of Indians who were culturally and morally inferior.

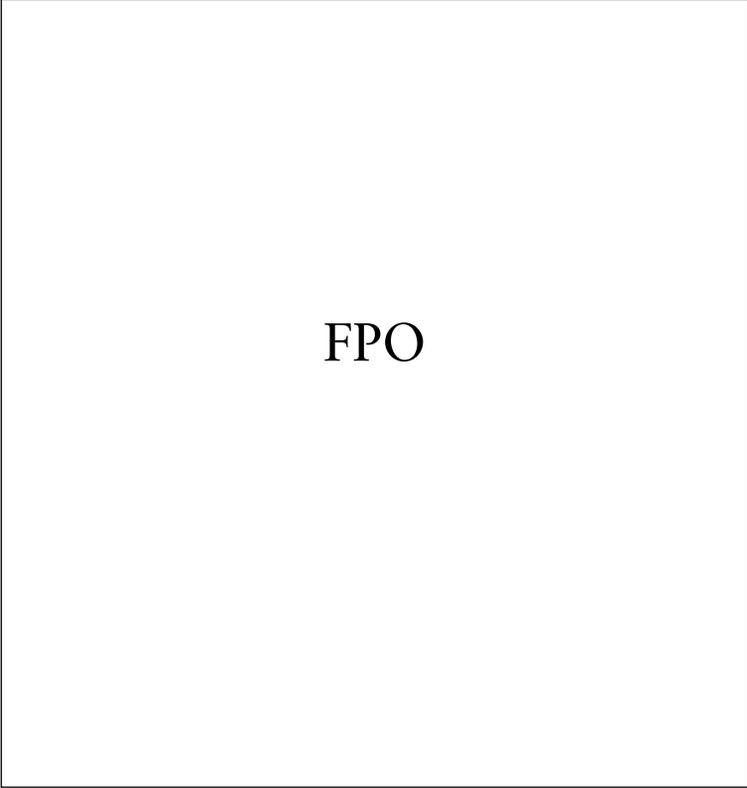
The rulers grew consciously more alien from those they ruled. One of them spoke approvingly of his countrymen as representatives of a 'belligerent civilization', and defined their task as

the introduction of the essential parts of European civilization into a country densely peopled, grossly ignorant, steeped in idolatrous superstition, unenergetic, fatalistic, indifferent to most of what we regard as the evils of life and preferring the response of submitting to them to the trouble of encountering and trying to remove them.

This robust creed was far from that of the Englishmen of the previous century, who had innocently sought to do no more in India than make money. Now, while new laws antagonized powerful native interests, the British had less and less social contact with Indians; more and more they confined the educated Indian to the lower ranks of the administration and withdrew into an enclosed, but conspicuously privileged, life of their own. Earlier conquerors had been absorbed by Indian society in greater or lesser measure; the Victorian British, thanks to a modern technology which continuously renewed their contacts with the homeland and their confidence in their intellectual and religious superiority, remained immune, increasingly aloof, as no earlier conqueror had been. They could not be untouched by India, as many legacies to the English language and the English breakfast and dinner-table still testify, but they created a civilization that confronted India as a challenge, though not wholly English; 'Anglo-Indian' in the nineteenth century was a word applied not to persons of mixed blood, but to Englishmen who made careers in India, and it indicated a cultural and social distinctiveness.

The separateness of Anglo-Indian society from India was made virtually absolute by the severe damage done to British confidence by the rebellions of 1857 called the Indian Mutiny. Essentially, this was a chain reaction of outbreaks, initiated by a mutiny of Hindu soldiers who feared the polluting effect of using a new type of cartridge, greased with animal fat. This detail is significant. Much of the rebellion was the spontaneous response of parts of Indian society to imposed modernization. By way of reinforcement there were the irritations of native rulers, both Muslim and Hindu, who regretted the loss of their privileges and thought that the chance might have come to recover their independence; the British were after all very few. The response of those few was prompt and ruthless. With the help of loyal Indian soldiers the rebellions were crushed, though not before there had been some massacres of British captives and a British force had been under siege at Lucknow, in rebel territory, for some months.

The Mutiny and its suppression were disasters for British India, though not quite unmitigated. It did not much matter that the Mughal empire was at last formally brought to an end by the British (the Delhi mutineers had proclaimed the last emperor their leader). Nor was there, as later Indian nationalists were to suggest, a crushing of a national liberation movement whose end was a tragedy for India. Like many episodes important in the making of nations, the Mutiny was to be important as a myth and an inspiration; what it was later believed to have been was more important than what it actually was, a jumble of essentially nativist protests. Its most significant effect was the growth of distance and mistrust between British



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and Indians, and – increasingly – between Muslims and Hindus in India, each of which began to regard the other as a tool of the British rulers. Immediately and institutionally, the Mutiny also marked an epoch because it ended the government of the East India Company. The governor-general now became the queen's viceroy, responsible to a British cabinet minister. This structure provided the framework of the British Raj for its life of ninety years.

The Mutiny thus changed Indian history, but by thrusting it more firmly in a direction to which it already tended. Another fact, which was equally revolutionary for India, was much more gradual in its effects. This was the nineteenth-century flowering of the economic connection with Great Britain. Commerce was the root of the British presence in the subcontinent and it continued to shape its destiny. The first major development came when India became the essential base for the China trade. Its greatest expansion came in the 1830s and 1840s when, for a number of reasons, access to China became much easier. It was at about the same time that there took place the first rapid rise in British exports to India, notably of textiles, so

that, by the time of the Mutiny, a big Indian commercial interest existed which involved many more Englishmen and English commercial houses than the old Company had ever done.

The story of Anglo-Indian trade was now locked into that of the general expansion of British manufacturing supremacy and world commerce. The Suez Canal brought down the costs of shipping goods to Asia by a huge factor. By the end of the century the volume of British trade with India had more than quadrupled. The effects were felt in both countries, but were decisive in India, where a check was imposed on an industrialization which might have gone ahead more rapidly without British competition. Paradoxically, the growth of trade thus delayed India's modernization and alienation from its own past. But there were other forces at work, too. By the end of the century the framework provided by the Raj and the stimulus of the cultural influences it permitted had already made unavoidable a dramatically changed India of the future.

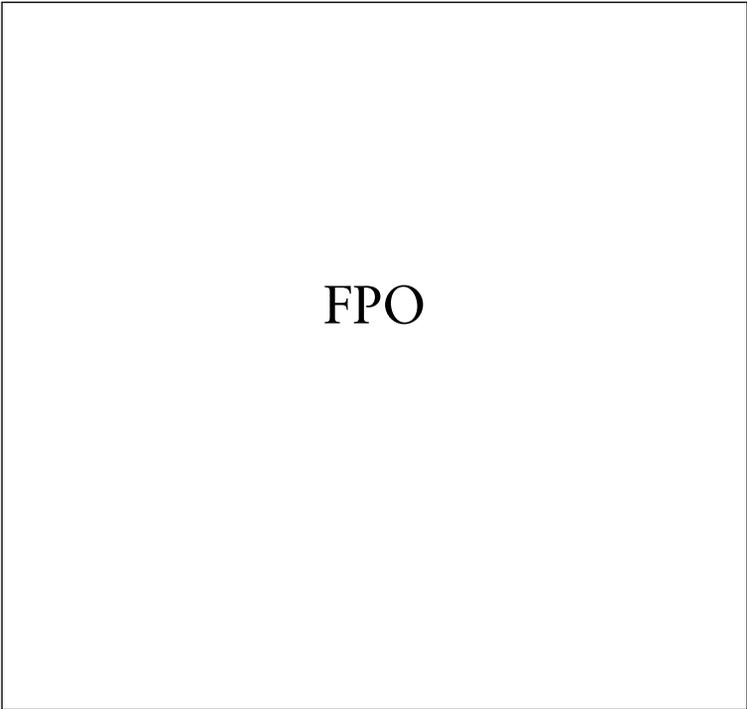
No other nation in the early nineteenth century so extended its imperial possessions as Great Britain, but the French had also made substantial additions to the empire with which they had been left in 1815. In the next half-century France's interests elsewhere (in West Africa and the South Pacific, for example) were not lost to sight, but the first clear sign of a reviving French imperialism came in Algeria. The whole of North Africa was open to imperial expansion by European predators because of the decay there of the formal overlordship of the Ottoman sultan. Right around the southern and eastern Mediterranean coasts the issue was posed of a possible Turkish partition. French interest in the area was natural; it went back to a great extension of the country's Levant trade in the eighteenth century. But a more precise marker had been the expedition to Egypt under Bonaparte in 1798, which opened the question of the Ottoman succession in its extra-European sphere.

Algeria's conquest began uncertainly in 1830. A series of wars not only with its native inhabitants but with the sultan of Morocco followed until, by 1870, most of the country had been subdued. This was, in fact, to open a new phase of expansion, for the French then turned their attention to Tunisia, which accepted a French protectorate in 1881. To both these sometime Ottoman dependencies there now began a steady flow of European immigrants, not only from France, but from Italy and, later, Spain. This built up substantial settler populations in a few cities which were to complicate the story of French rule. The day was past when the African Algerian might have been exterminated or all but exterminated, like the Aztec, American Indian or Australian Aborigine. His society, in any case, was more resistant, formed in the crucible of an Islamic civilization which had

once contested so successfully with Christendom. None the less, he suffered, notably from the introduction of land law which broke up his traditional usages and impoverished the peasant by exposing him to the full blast of market economics.

At the eastern end of the African littoral, a national awakening in Egypt led to the emergence there of the first great modernizing nationalist leader outside the European world, Muhammad Ali, *pasha* of Egypt. Admiring Europe, he sought to borrow its ideas and techniques while asserting his independence of the sultan. When he was later called upon for help by the sultan against the Greek revolution, Ali went on to attempt to seize Syria as his reward. This threat to the Ottoman empire provoked an international crisis in the 1830s in which the French took the *pasha's* side. They were not successful, but thereafter French policy continued to interest itself in the Levant and Syria too, an interest which was eventually to bear fruit in the brief establishment in the twentieth century of a French presence in the area.

The feeling that Great Britain and France had made good use of their opportunities in the early part of the nineteenth century was no doubt one reason why other powers tried to follow them from 1870 onwards. But



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envious emulation does not go far as an explanation of the extraordinary suddenness and vigour of what has sometimes been called the 'imperialist wave' of the late nineteenth century. Outside Antarctica and the Arctic, less than a fifth of the world's land surface was not under a European flag or that of a country of European settlement by 1914; and of this small fraction only Japan, Ethiopia and Siam (Thailand) enjoyed real autonomy. Why this happened has been much debated. Clearly one part of the story is that of the sheer momentum of accumulated forces. The European hegemony became more and more irresistible as it built upon its own strength. The theory and ideology of imperialism were, up to a point, mere rationalizations of the huge power the European world suddenly found itself to possess.

The political situation in Europe certainly influenced the race for new colonies. With two new major European powers, Germany and Italy, in the running, rivalries among European countries mounted. Although most governments realized that the acquisition of new territory in, say, central Africa was not exactly a money-spinner, they had bought into the pseudo-Darwinian idea that the competition for land was a contest about the future: if governments did not act now, they would be left further and further behind in the struggle to survive. As competition over technological and organizational advancement grew, colonies also became a measure-stick for modernity and proof of the virility of an expanding culture.

Technology had practical advantages as well. As medicine began to master tropical infection, and steam provided quicker transport, it became easier to establish permanent bases in Africa and to penetrate its interior; the continent had long been of interest but its exploitation began to be feasible for the first time in the 1870s. Such technical developments made possible and attractive a spreading of European rule which could promote and protect trade and investment. The hopes such possibilities aroused were often ill-founded and usually disappointed. Whatever the appeal of 'undeveloped estates' in Africa (as one British statesman imaginatively but misleadingly put it), or the supposedly vast market for consumer goods constituted by the penniless millions of China, industrial countries still found other industrial countries their best customers and trading partners. Former or existing colonies attracted more overseas capital investment than new acquisitions. By far the greatest part of British money invested abroad went to the United States and South America; French investors preferred Russia to Africa, and German money went to Turkey.

On the other hand, economic expectation excited many individuals. Because of them, imperial expansion always had a random factor in it which makes it hard to generalize about. Explorers, traders and adventur-

ers on many occasions took steps which led governments, willingly or not, to seize more territory. They were often popular heroes, for this most active phase of European imperialism coincided with a great growth of popular participation in public affairs. By buying newspapers, voting or cheering in the streets, the masses were more and more involved in politics, which, among other things, emphasized imperial competition as a form of national rivalry. The new cheap press often pandered to this by dramatizing exploration and colonial warfare. Some also thought that social dissatisfactions might be soothed by the contemplation of the extension of the rule of the national flag over new areas, even when the experts knew that nothing was likely to be forthcoming except expense.

But cynicism is no more the whole story than is the profit motive. The idealism which inspired some imperialists certainly salved the conscience of many more. Men who believed that they possessed true civilization were bound to see the ruling of others for their good as a duty. Kipling's famous poem urged Americans to take up the White Man's Burden, not his Booty.

Many diverse elements were thus tangled together after 1870 in a context of changing international relationships which imposed its own logic on colonial affairs. The story need not be explained in detail, but two continuing themes stand out. One is that, as the only truly worldwide imperial power, Great Britain quarrelled with other states over colonies more than anyone else – its possessions were everywhere. The centre of its concerns was more than ever India; the acquisition of African territory to safeguard the Cape route and the new one via Suez, and frequent alarms over dangers to the lands which were India's north-western and western glacis, both showed this. Between 1870 and 1914 the only crises over non-European issues which made war between Great Britain and another great power seem possible arose over Russian dabbings in Afghanistan and a French attempt to establish themselves on the Upper Nile. British officials were also much concerned about French penetration of West Africa and Indochina, and Russian influence in Persia.

These facts indicate the second continuing theme. Though European nations quarrelled about what happened overseas for forty years or so, and though the United States went to war with one of them (Spain), the partition by the great powers of the non-European world was still amazingly peaceful. When a Great War at last broke out in 1914, Great Britain, Russia and France, the three nations which had quarrelled with one another most over imperial difficulties, would be on the same side; it was not overseas colonial rivalry which caused the conflict. Only once after 1900, in Morocco, did a real danger of war occasioned by a quarrel over non-European lands arise between two European great powers, and here the

issue was not really one of colonial rivalry but of whether Germany could bully France without fear of her being supported by others. Quarrels over non-European affairs before 1914 seem in fact to have been a positive distraction from the more dangerous rivalries of Europe itself; they may even have helped to preserve European peace.

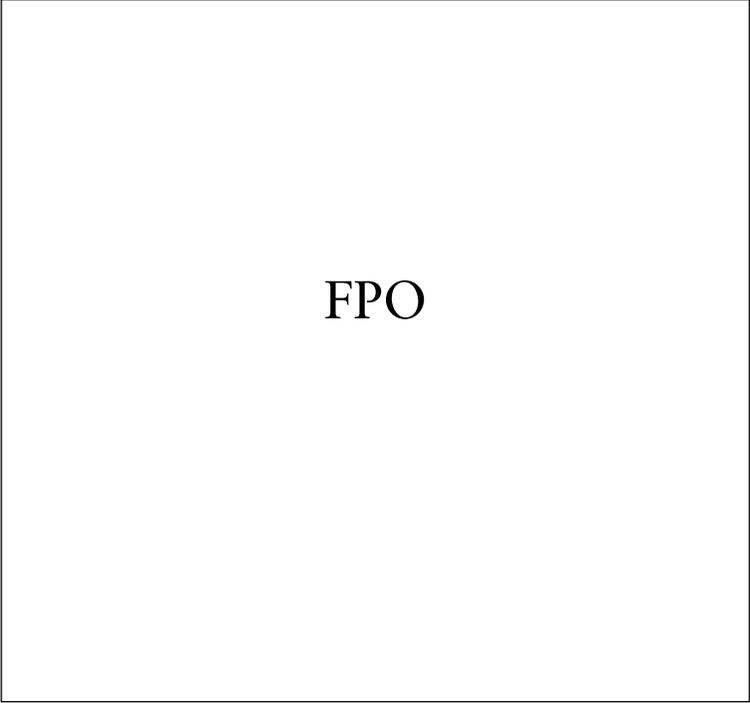
Imperial rivalry had its own momentum. When one power got a new concession or a colony, it almost always spurred on others to go one better. The imperialist wave was in this way self-feeding. By 1914 the most striking results were to be seen in Africa. The activities of explorers, missionaries and the campaigners against slavery early in the nineteenth century had encouraged the belief that extension of European rule in the 'Dark Continent' was a matter of spreading enlightenment and humanitarianism – the blessings of civilization, in fact. On the African coasts, centuries of trade had shown that desirable products were available in the interior. The whites at the Cape were already pushing further inland (often because of Boer resentment of British rule). Such facts made up an explosive mixture, which was set off in 1881 when a British force was sent to Egypt to secure that country's government against a nationalist revolution whose success (it was feared) might threaten the safety of the Suez Canal. The corrosive power of European culture – for this was the source of the ideas of the Egyptian nationalists – thus both touched off another stage in the decline of the Ottoman empire, of which Egypt was still formally a part, and launched what was called the 'Scramble for Africa'.

The British had hoped to withdraw their soldiers from Egypt quickly; in 1914 they were still there. British officials were by then virtually running the administration of the country while, to the south, Anglo-Egyptian rule had been pushed deep into the Sudan. Meanwhile, Turkey's western provinces in Libya (Tripolitania and Cyrenaica) had been taken by the Italians (who felt unjustly kept out of Tunisia by the French protectorate there), Algeria was French, and the French enjoyed a fairly free hand in Morocco, except where the Spanish were installed. Southwards from Morocco to the Cape of Good Hope, the coastline was entirely divided between the British, French, Germans, Spanish, Portuguese and Belgians, with the exception of the isolated black republic of Liberia. The empty wastes of the Sahara were French; so was the basin of the Senegal and much of the northern side of that of the Congo. The Belgians were installed in the rest of it on what was soon to prove some of the richest mineral-bearing land in Africa. Further east, British territories ran from the Cape up to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and the Congo border. On the east coast they were cut off from the sea by Tanganyika (Tanzania, which was German) and Portuguese East Africa. From Mombasa, Kenya's port, a belt of British territory stretched through

Uganda to the borders of the Sudan and the headwaters of the Nile. Somalia and Eritrea (in British, Italian and French hands) isolated Ethiopia, the only African country other than Liberia still independent of European rule. The ruler of this ancient but Christian polity was the only non-European ruler of the nineteenth century to avert the threat of colonization by a military success, the annihilation of an Italian army at Adowa in 1896. Other Africans did not have the power to resist successfully, as the French suppression of Algerian revolt in 1871, the Portuguese mastery (with some difficulty) of insurrection in Angola in 1902 and again in 1907, the British destruction of the Zulu and Matabele, and, worst of all, the German massacre of the Herero of South-West Africa in 1907, all showed.

This colossal extension of European power, for the most part achieved after 1881, transformed African history. It was the most important change since the arrival in the continent of Islam. The bargains of European negotiators, the accidents of discovery and the convenience of colonial administrations in the end settled the ways in which modernization came to Africa. The suppression of inter-tribal warfare and the introduction of even elementary medical services released population growth in some areas. As in America centuries earlier, the introduction of new crops made it possible to feed more people. Different colonial regimes had different cultural and economic impact, however. Long after the colonialists had gone, there would be big distinctions between countries where, say, French administration or British judicial practice had taken root. All over the continent Africans found new patterns of employment, learnt something of European ways through European schools or service in colonial regiments, saw different things to admire or hate in the white man's ways which now came to regulate their lives. Even when, as in some British possessions, great emphasis was placed on rule through native institutions, they had henceforth to work in a new context. Tribal and local unities would go on asserting themselves but more and more did so against the grain of new structures created by colonialism and left as a legacy to independent Africa. Christian monogamy, entrepreneurial attitudes and new knowledge (to which the way had been opened by European languages, the most important of all the cultural implants) all contributed finally to a new self-consciousness and greater individualism. From such influences would emerge the new African élites of the twentieth century. Imperialism shaped Africa more than it shaped any other continent.

Europe, by contrast, was hardly changed by the African adventure. Clearly, it was important that Europeans could lay their hands on yet more easily exploitable wealth, yet probably only Belgium drew from Africa resources making a real difference to its national future. Sometimes, too,



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the exploiting of Africa aroused political opposition in European countries; there was more than a touch of the *conquistadores* about some of the late nineteenth-century adventurers. The administration of the Congo by the Belgian King Leopold and forced labour in Portuguese Africa were notorious examples, but there were other places where Africa's natural resources – human and material – were ruthlessly exploited or despoiled in the interests of profit by Europeans with the connivance of imperial authorities, and this soon created an anti-colonial movement. Some nations recruited African soldiers, though not for service in Europe, where only the French hoped to employ them to offset the weight of German numbers. Some countries hoped for outlets for emigration which would ease social problems, but the opportunities presented by Africa for European residence were very mixed. There were two large blocks of white settlement in the south, and the British would later begin to settle Kenya and Rhodesia, where there were lands suitable for white farmers. Apart from this, there were the Europeans in the cities of French North Africa, and a growing community of Portuguese planters in Angola. The hopes entertained of Africa as an outlet for Italians, on the other hand, were disappointed, while

German immigration was tiny and almost entirely temporary. Some European countries – Russia, Austria, Hungary and the Scandinavian nations – sent virtually no settlers to Africa at all.

Of course, there was much more than Africa to the story of nineteenth-century imperialism. The Pacific was partitioned less dramatically, but in the end no independent political unit survived among its island peoples. There was also a big expansion of British, French and Russian territory in Asia. The French established themselves in Indochina, the British in Malaya and Burma, which they took to safeguard the approaches to India. Siam retained her independence because it suited both powers to have a buffer between them. The British also asserted their superiority by an expedition to Tibet, with similar considerations of Indian security in mind. Most of these areas, like much of the zone of Russian overland expansion, were formally under Chinese suzerainty. Their story is part of that of the crumbling Chinese empire, a story which paralleled the corrosion of other empires, such as the Ottoman, Moroccan and Persian, by European influence, though it had greater importance still for world history. At one moment it looked as if a Scramble for China might follow that for Africa. That story is better considered elsewhere. Here it is convenient to note that the imperialist wave in the Chinese sphere, as in the Pacific, was also importantly different from that in Africa because the United States of America took part.

Americans had always been uneasy and distrustful over imperial ventures outside the continent they long regarded as God-given to them. Even at its most arrogant, imperialism had to be masked, muffled and muted in the republic in a way unnecessary in Europe. The very creation of the United States had been by successful rebellion against an imperial power. The constitution contained no provision for the ruling of colonial possessions and it was always very difficult to see what could be the position under it of territories which could not be envisaged as eventually moving towards full statehood, let alone that of non-Americans who stayed under American rule. On the other hand, there was much that was barely distinguishable from imperialism in the nineteenth-century territorial expansion of the United States, although Americans might not recognize it when it was packaged as a 'Manifest Destiny'. The most blatant examples were the war of 1812 against the British and the treatment of Mexico in the middle of the century. But there was also the dispossession of the Indians to consider and the dominating implications of the Monroe doctrine.

In the 1890s the overland expansion of the United States was complete. It was announced that the continuous frontier of domestic settlement no longer existed. At this moment, economic growth had given great

importance to the influence of business interests in American government, sometimes expressed in terms of economic nationalism and high tariff protection. Some of these interests directed the attention of American public opinion abroad, notably to Asia. The United States was thought by some to be in danger of exclusion from trade there by the European powers. There was an old connection at stake (the first American Far Eastern squadron had been sent out in the 1820s) as a new era of Pacific awareness dawned with California's rapid growth in population. Half a century's talk of a canal across Central America also came to a head at the end of the century; it stimulated interest in the doctrines of strategists who suggested that the United States might need an oceanic glacis in the Pacific to maintain the Monroe doctrine.

All these currents flowed into a burst of expansion which has remained to this day a unique example of American overseas imperialism because, for a time, it set aside traditional restraint on the acquisition of new territory overseas. The beginnings lie in the increased opening of China and Japan to American commerce in the 1850s and 1860s, and to participation with the British and the Germans in the administration of Samoa (where a naval base obtained in 1878 has remained a United States possession). This was followed by two decades of growing intervention in the affairs of the kingdom of Hawaii, to which the protection of the United States had been extended since the 1840s. American traders and missionaries had established themselves there in large numbers. Benevolent patronage of the Hawaiians then gave way to attempts to engineer annexation to the United States in the 1890s. Washington already had the use of Pearl Harbor as a naval base but was led to land marines in Hawaii when a revolution occurred there. In the end, the government had to give way to the forces set in motion by the settlers, and a short-lived Hawaiian republic was annexed as a United States territory in 1898.

In that year, a mysterious explosion destroyed an American cruiser, the USS *Maine*, in Havana harbour. This became an excuse for war with Spain. In the background was both the long Spanish failure to master revolt in Cuba, where American business interests were prominent and American sentiment was aroused, and the growing awareness of the importance of the Caribbean approaches to a future canal across the isthmus. In Asia, American help was given to another rebel movement against the Spaniards in the Philippines. When American rule replaced that of the Spanish in Manila, the rebels turned against their former allies and a guerrilla war began. This was the first phase of a long and difficult process of disentanglement for the United States from her first Asian colony. Administration after administration in Washington claimed that the Philippines was not

yet ready for independence; their freedom would be exploited by other powers, it was held, and it was therefore best that the United States did not withdraw. In the Caribbean, it was the United States that at last brought the long history of Spanish empire in the Americas to an end. Puerto Rico passed to the Americans, and Cuba obtained its independence on terms which guaranteed its domination by the United States. American forces went back to occupy the island under these terms from 1906 to 1909, and again in 1917.

This was the prelude to the last major development in this wave of American imperialism. The building of an isthmian canal had been canvassed since the middle of the nineteenth century and the completion of Suez Canal gave it new plausibility. American diplomacy negotiated a way around the obstacle of possible British participation; all seemed plain sailing but a snag arose in 1903 when a treaty providing for the acquisition of a canal zone from Colombia was rejected by the Colombians. A revolution was engineered in Panama, where the canal was to run. The United States prevented its suppression by the Colombian government and a new Panamanian republic emerged, which gratefully bestowed upon the United States the necessary territory together with the right to intervene in its affairs to maintain order. The work could now begin and the canal was opened in 1914. The possibility of transferring ships rapidly from one ocean to another made a great difference to American naval strategy. It was also the background to the 'corollary' to the Monroe doctrine proposed by President Theodore Roosevelt; when the canal zone became the key to the naval defence of the hemisphere, it was more important than ever to assure its protection by stable government and United States predominance in the Caribbean states. A new vigour in American intervention in them was soon evident.

Though its motives and techniques were different – for one thing, there was virtually no permanent American settlement in the new possessions – the actions of the United States can be seen as part of the last great seizure of territories carried out by the European peoples. Almost all of them had taken part except the South Americans; even the Queenslanders had tried to annexe New Guinea. By 1914 a third of the world's surface was under two flags, those of the United Kingdom and Russia (though how much Russian territory should be regarded as colonial is, of course, debatable). To take a measure which excludes Russia, in 1914 the United Kingdom ruled 400 million subjects outside its own borders, France over 50 million and Germany and Italy about 14 million each. This was an unprecedented aggregation of formal authority.

At that date, though, there were already signs that imperialism overseas

had run out of steam. China had proved remarkably difficult to control and there was little left to divide, though Germany and Great Britain discussed the possibility of partitioning the Portuguese empire, which seemed to be about to follow the Spanish. The most likely area left for further European imperialism was the decaying Ottoman empire, and its dissolution seemed at last to be imminent when the Italians seized Tripoli in 1912 and a Balkan coalition formed against Turkey took away almost all that was left of her European territories in the following year. Such a prospect did not seem likely to be so free from conflict between great powers as had been the partition of Africa; much more crucial issues would be at stake in it for them.