

## Imperialism in Africa: Case of South Africa

The first lecture of this class discussed various areas of African civilization, centered around river valleys and discussed various trade routes. We also examined maps that demonstrated the de-urbanization of Africa; however, even in 1800, there was little penetration into the interior of the continent. Other lectures alluded to the fact that where previous relations of trade existed there was less need for physical takeover, as was the case in New Spain and the English colonies of North America. The situation had greatly changed by the last quarter of the century as changes in the industrial revolution, combined with revolutions in transportation and communication, fueled greater demands for raw materials—although settlement was quite limited. This too would change by 1914.

North Africa was controlled mainly by British (Egypt/Sudan) and the French (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia), with the Italians (Libya) and Spanish playing a lesser role. West Africa was controlled mainly by French, but also British, Spanish, Portuguese and growing German influence—interested in the pre-existing networks of trade. German Chancellor Bismarck called Berlin conferences in 1884 and 1885 to consider the role of Africa in the overall “balance of power.” Equatorial Africa had fewer inhabitants and resources—Congo Free state, French Congo, and Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique—abuse was widespread. Our old buddy Casement also documented abuse of the rubber industry in the Congo Free state, which ultimately led to the Belgian government’s takeover of what was essentially a royal initiative backed by an American citizen’s funds.

South Africa was different from the aforementioned regions—it had attracted settlers for centuries<sup>1</sup>—Afrikaners, descendents of Dutch (as well as Huguenot and German) settlers moved inland throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and British settlers, as well as Indians brought over by the British, continued to settle. Resources, e.g. fertile land and mineral resources, attracted this settlement. The Zulu, the most powerful of the indigenous peoples, resented both the Afrikaners and the newer British settlers. They valiantly held the British at bay but by 1880, their lands were captured and given to white ranchers. After diamond and gold were discovered in areas that the Afrikaners had settled, both British entrepreneurs and the government—they wanted the two Afrikaner states as well as to push into Central Africa, in what is now Zimbabwe and Zambia. Conflicts emerged between the British and the Afrikaner “freedom fighters” (Boers), resulting in war between 1899 and 1902—even though the latter were defeated, the British ultimately cut them the same type of deal that existed in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia.

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<sup>1</sup> There were settlers in other places, notably Algeria, since 1830.