## B. EUROPEAN IMPERIALISM IN INDIA

As you know from the previous chapter, the Indian subcontinent had long been a destination of European traders eager to get their hands on India's many luxuries, such as tea, sugar, silk, salt, and jute (an extremely strong fiber used for ropes). By the early eighteenth century, the Mughal Empire (Remember that?) was in decline following decades of fighting wars and by renewed religious conflict between Muslims and Hindus. Lacking a strong leader and a unified people created an opening (as it so often does) for external powers to move in. And that is precisely what Britain and France decided to do.

In the 1750s, the rivalry between France and England reached fever pitch. During the Seven Years' War (more on it later), the two countries battled each other in three theaters: North America, Europe, and India. England won across the board. The **British East India Company,** a joint-stock company that operated like a multinational corporation with exclusive rights over British trade with India, then led in India by **Robert Clive,** raised an effective army that ridded the subcontinent of the French. During the next two decades, Clive successfully conquered the Bengal region (present-day Bangladesh), quite a feat given that the East India Company was a *corporation*. It wasn't British troops who conquered the region, but corporate troops!

Over the next hundred years, the company took advantage of the weakening Mughals and set up administrative regions throughout the empire. In 1798, the large island of Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) fell to the British. In the early 1800's, the Punjab region in northern India came under British control, and from there the Brits launched excursions into Pakistan and Afghanistan.

### The Sepoy Mutiny: Too Little, Too Late

To help it administer the regions under its control, The East India Company relied on Sepoys, Indians who worked for the Brits, mostly as soldiers. By the mid-1800's, the Sepoys were becoming increasingly alarmed with the company's insatiable appetite for eating up larger and larger chunks of the subcontinent. What's more, the company wasn't very good about respecting the local customs of the Sepoys, and respected neither Muslim nor Hindu religious customs. When, in 1857, the Sepoys learned that their bullet cartridges (which had to be bitten off in order to load into the rifle) were greased with pork and beef fat, thus violating both Muslim and Hindu dietary laws, the Sepoys rebelled. The fighting continued for nearly two years, but the rebellion failed miserably.

The consequences were huge. In 1858, the British parliament stepped in, took control of India away from the East India Company, and made all of India a crown colony. The last of the Mughal rulers, **Bahadur Shah II**, was sent into exile, thereby ending the Mughal Empire for good. Nearly 300 million Indians were suddenly British subjects (that's as many people as currently living in the United States). By 1877, Queen Victoria was recognized as Empress of India.

## Full-Blown British Colonialism: England on the Indus

In the second half of the nineteenth century, India became the model of British imperialism. Raw materials flowed to Britain; finished products flowed back to India. The upper castes were taught English and were expected to adopt English attitudes. Christianity spread. Railroads and canals were built. Urbanization, as in Europe, increased dramatically. But all of this came at the expense of the Indian culture and Indian institutions. Still, as the upper castes were Anglicized, they gained the education and worldly sophistication to begin to influence events. Increasingly, they dreamed of freeing India from British rule.

In 1885, a group of well-educated Indians formed the **Indian National Congress** to begin the path toward independence. It would take the impact of two world wars before they would get it. In the meantime, Indians, especially those that lived in the cities, continued to adapt to British customs while trying to hold on to their traditions.

## C. EUROPEAN IMPERIALISM IN CHINA

As you know, for much of its history, China was relatively isolationist. It traded frequently, but it didn't make exploration a high priority. It also expanded by conquering its neighbors, but never took this expansion beyond its own region of the globe. Up until the 1830's, China allowed the European powers to trade only in the port city of Canton, and it established strict limitations on what could be bought and sold. But as the European powers, particularly the British, gained industrial muscle, they came barging in, this time with weapons and warships.

## The Opium Wars: European Drug Pushers Force Their Right to Deal

In 1773, British traders introduced opium to the Chinese. By 1838, the drug habit among the Chinese had grown so widespread and destructive that the Manchu Emperor released an imperial edict forbidding the further sale or use of opium. Consistent with this edict, the Chinese seized British opium in Canton in 1839.

The British would have none of it. From 1839 to 1842, the two countries fought a war over the opium trade. This was known as the first **Opium War.** Overwhelmed by British military might, China was forced to sign the **Treaty of Nanjing,** the first of what came to be known as the **"unequal treaties,"** by which Britain was given considerable rights to expand trade with China. And, of course, the right to create more opium addicts.

In 1843, Britain declared Hong Kong its own crown possession, a significant development because that went beyond trading rights and actually established a British colony in the region. In 1844, the Manchu Dynasty was forced to permit Christian missionaries back into the country.

When China resisted British attempts to expand the opium trade even further, the two countries fought a second Opium War for four years beginning in 1856. The Chinese defeat was humiliating. It resulted in the opening of all of China to European trade. Still, other than in Hong Kong, European imperialism in China was quite different from what it was in India and what it would be in Africa. In China, Britain fought more for trading concessions than for the establishment of colonies.

## The Word Is Out: China Is Crumbling

The Opium Wars had a huge impact on the global perception of China. For centuries, the world knew that China was one of the more advanced civilizations. With the clear-cut British defeat of China with relatively few troops, the world realized that China was an easy target. What's more, the Chinese themselves knew that their government was weak, and so they, too, started to rebel against it. Internal rebellion started at the beginning of the nineteenth century with the **White Lotus Rebellions** led by Buddhists who were frustrated over taxes and government corruption. It continued through the middle of the century with the **Taiping Rebellion.** The Taipings, led by a religious zealot claiming to be the brother of Jesus, recruited an army nearly a million strong and nearly succeeded in bringing

down the Manchu government. The rebels failed, but the message was clear. China was crumbling from within, and unable to stop foreign aggression from outside.

In the 1860's, the Manchu Dynasty tried to get its act together in what became known as the **Self-Strengthening Movement**, but it did no good. In 1876, Korea realized China was weak and declared its independence. Later, in the **Sino-French War** (1883), the Chinese lost control of Vietnam to the French, who established a colony there called French Indochina. If that wasn't enough, a decade later the Chinese were defeated in the **Sino-Japanese War,** when the rising imperial power of Japan wanted in on the action. In the **Treaty of Shimonoseki** (1895), China was forced to hand over control of Taiwan and grant the Japanese trading rights similar to those it had granted the Europeans. Japan also defeated the Koreans and took control of the entire peninsula.

Meanwhile, the European powers were rushing to establish a greater presence in China. By establishing **spheres of influence,** France, Germany, Russia, and of course Britain carved up huge slices of China for themselves. These spheres were not quite colonies. Instead, they were areas in which the European powers invested heavily, built military bases, and set up business, transportation, and communication operations. The Manchu Dynasty was still the governmental authority within the spheres.

By 1900, the United States, which had its own trading designs on Asia, was worried that China would become another India or Africa, and that the United States would be shut out of trade if the Manchu government fell and the Europeans took over the government. Through its **Open Door Policy**, the United States pledged its support of the sovereignty of the Chinese government and announced equal trading privileges among all imperial powers (basically Europe and the United States).

## The Boxer Rebellion: Knocked Out in the First Round

By the twentieth century, nationalism among the Chinese peasants and local leadership was festering. Anti-Manchu, anti-European, and anti-Christian, the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists, or **Boxers** as they came to be known, organized in response to the Manchu government's defeats and concessions to the Western powers and Japan. Infuriated, the Boxers' goal was to drive the Europeans and Japanese out of China. Adopting guerilla warfare tactics, the Boxers slaughtered Christian missionaries and seized control of foreign embassies. Ultimately, however, they were not successful in achieving their aims. Instead, their uprising resulted in the dispatch of foreign reinforcements who quickly and decisively put down the rebellion. The Manchu government, already having made great concessions to the Europeans and Japanese, was then even further humiliated. As a result of the rebellion, China was forced to sign the **Boxer Protocol**, which demanded that China not only pay the Europeans and the Japanese the costs associated with the rebellion but also to formally apologize for it as well.

## Contrast Them: European Imperialism in China and in India

Multiple European countries originally traded with India, but the British won out and established exclusive control. In China, the British dominated trade early on, and as they succeeded, more and more countries piled on.

In India, the British established a true colony, running the government and directing huge internal projects. In China, Europeans and the Japanese established spheres of influence, focusing on the economic benefits of trade with no overall governmental responsibilities. Therefore, when independence movements began in India, the efforts were directed against Britain, the foreign occupier. In contrast, when the people wanted to change the government in China, they targeted the Manchu Dynasty.

On its last legs, the Manchu Dynasty couldn't prevent the forces of reform from overtaking it from both within and without, and as a consequence, Chinese culture itself started to crumble. In 1901, foot binding was abolished. In 1905, the 2,000-year-old Chinese Examination System was eliminated. By 1911, the government was toppled and imperial rule came to an end. For the first time, under the leadership of **Sun Yat-sen**, a republic was established in China. But more on this in the next chapter.

## D. JAPANESE IMPERIALISM

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Japan succeeded in keeping European influences away from its shores. It consequently built a highly ethnocentric, self-involved society that didn't even allow its own citizens to travel abroad. But by the nineteenth century and the Industrial Revolution, the Europeans and the United States became so powerful and so crazed for markets that Japan found it hard to keep the westerners at bay. In 1853, **Commodore Matthew Perry** from the United States (not the one from *Friends*) arrived in Japan on a steamboat, something the Japanese had never seen before, and essentially shocked the Japanese, who quickly realized that their isolation had resulted in their inability to compete economically and militarily with the industrialized world.

For a time, the West won concessions from Japan through various treaties such as the **Treaty of Kanagawa** (1854). These treaties grossly favored the United States and other countries. As in China, the nationalists grew resentful, but unlike the Chinese, the Japanese were organized. Through the leadership of the samurai, they revolted against the shogun who had ratified these treaties, and restored Emperor Meiji to power.

### The Meiji Restoration: Shogun Out, Emperor In, Westerners Out

The **Meiji Restoration** ushered in an era of Japanese westernization, after which Japan emerged as a world power. By the 1870's, Japan was building railways and steamships. By 1876, the samurai warrior class as an institution had been abolished, and universal military service among all males was established.

The relative isolation of Japan during the Tokugawa and the deliberate attempt to westernize while strengthening Japanese imperial traditions during the Meiji led to a period of increased cultural creativity with rituals aimed at developing national identity. Much of this new identity was centered on military pageantry that celebrated Japanese victories over China and Russia in the early twentieth-century.

In the 1890's, Japanese industrial and military power really started to roll. It was now powerful enough to substantially reduce European and U.S. influence. It maintained trade, but on equal footing with western powers. Japan went through an incredibly quick Industrial Revolution. In 1895, Japan defeated China in a war for control of Korea and Taiwan. Japan was now an imperial power itself. Later, after the **Russo-Japanese War** of 1904, the victorious Japanese kicked Russia out of Manchuria and established its own sphere of influence there. Japan was now not just an imperial power, but a world power.

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### Compare Them: The Industrial Revolution in Europe and in Japan

The industrialization of Europe and Japan followed very similar paths, but Japan's was on fast forward. It managed to accomplish in a few decades what had taken Europe more than a century, in large part because it didn't have to invent everything itself—it just needed to implement the advances of western industrialization. Still, the pattern was remarkably similar. Private corporations rose up, industrialists like the Mitsubishi family became wealthy, factories were built, urbanization increased dramatically, and reform was instituted. Japan learned from the Europeans quite well. If you can't beat an industrialized power, become one yourself.

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# E. European Imperialism in Africa

Unlike India and China, and to a certain degree Japan, Africa held little interest for most Europeans prior to the Industrial Revolution. To be sure, north of the Sahara, in Egypt and along the Mediterranean, Europeans had historical interest and impact. But the vast interior of the continent remained unknown to the outside world. During the Age of Exploration, coastal regions of Africa became important to Europeans for limited trade, and also for strategic positioning, as stopping-off points for merchant ships en route to India or China. Most significantly, of course, Africa became the center of the slave trade.

## The Slave Trade Finally Ends

As Enlightenment principles took root in Europe, larger and larger numbers of people grew outraged at the idea of slavery. Between 1807 and 1820, most European nations abolished the slave trade, although slavery itself was not abolished until a few decades later. In other words, no new slaves were legally imported from Africa, but those already in Europe or the New World continued to be enslaved until emancipation in the mid-nineteenth century. In some cases, former slaves returned to Africa. Groups of former American slaves, for example, emigrated to Liberia, where they established an independent nation.

It's a terrible irony that as the slave trade ended in the nineteenth century, Europeans turned their greedy eyes to the continent of Africa itself. Within 50 years, the Africans were subjugated again, but this time in their own homeland.

## South Africa: Gold Rings, a Diamond Necklace, and a British Crown

Prior to the discovery of gold and diamonds in South Africa in the 1860's and 1880's, South Africa was valuable to the Europeans only for shipping and military reasons. The Dutch arrived first and settled Cape Town as a stopping point for ships on the way from Europe to India. In 1795, the British seized Cape Town, and the South African Dutch (now known as Boers or Afrikaners) trekked northeast into the interior of South Africa, settling in a region known as the Transvaal. When the Boers later discovered diamonds and gold in the Transvaal, the British quickly followed, fighting a series of wars for the rights to the resources. After years of bloody battles, known as the **Boer War** (1899–1902), the British reigned supreme, and all of South Africa was annexed as part of the ever-expanding British Empire. Of course, throughout this entire process, Africans were not allowed claims to the gold and diamonds, and were made to work in the mines as their natural resources were sent abroad.

South Africa became a significant British colony, complete with extensive investment in infrastructure and institutions. In 1910, the colony had its own constitution, and it became the Union of South Africa, still part of the British Commonwealth, but exercising a considerable amount of self-rule. Under the constitution, only white men could vote, so the native Africans had few rights. In 1912, educated South Africans organized the **African National Congress** in an effort to oppose European colonialism and specific South African policies. This organization, of course, was similar to the Indian National Congress, which was established for similar ends.

## Egypt: A New Waterway Makes a Splash

In theory, the Ottomans ruled Egypt from 1517 until 1882, although throughout the nineteenth century, Ottoman rule was extremely weak. Local rulers, called *beys*, had far more influence over developments in Egypt than the rulers in Istanbul. When Napoleon tried to conquer Egypt during his tireless attempt to expand France into a mega-empire at the turn of the nineteenth century, **Muhammed Ali** defeated the French and the Ottomans, and gained control of Egypt in 1805. Egypt technically remained part of the Ottoman Empire, but as viceroy, Ali wielded almost exclusive control. During the next 30 years, he began the industrialization of Egypt and directed the expansion of agriculture toward cotton production, which was then exported to the textile factories of Britain for substantial profit.

Ali's westernization attempts were temporarily halted by his successor, **Abbas I**, but were reinvigorated under subsequent rulers, who worked with the French to begin construction of the **Suez Canal**. The canal, when completed in 1869, connected the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean, eliminating the need to go around the Cape of Good Hope. Because Britain had a huge colony in India, the canal became more important to the British than to anyone else. As Egypt's finances went into a tailspin because of excessive government spending, Egypt started selling stock in its canal to raise money, stock that the British government eagerly gobbled up. By 1882, Britain not only controlled the Suez Canal, but had maneuvered its way into Egypt to such a degree that it declared it a British protectorate, which was essentially a colony except that Egyptians remained in political power.

Pushed out of Egypt, France focused on other parts of North Africa, particularly Nigeria. The Italians, once they had unified as a country, also became interested in North Africa. The race for control of Africa was on.

## The Berlin Conference: Carving Up the Continent

In 1884, Otto von Bismarck hosted the major European powers at a conference in Berlin intended to resolve some differences over various European claims to lands in the African Congo. By the end of the conference, the delegates had set up rules for how future colonization rights and boundaries would be determined on that continent. With rules in hand, the Europeans left the conference in haste. Each country wanted to be the first to establish possession in the various parts of Africa. Within three decades, almost the entire continent of Africa was colonized by Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Belgium. Only Ethiopia and Liberia remained independent of European rule by 1914.

While the Europeans added substantial infrastructure to the continent by building railroads, dams, and roads, they stripped Africa of its resources for profit and treated the natives harshly. Every colonial power except Britain exercised direct rule over its colonies, meaning Europeans were put in positions of authority and the colonies were remade according to European customs. The British, having their hands full with the huge colony in India and massive spheres of influence in China and elsewhere, permitted the native populations to rule themselves more directly and to more freely practice their traditional customs (similar to how the Roman Empire handled its far-flung territories).

Because the Berlin Conference of 1884 encouraged colonialism solely based on bargaining for political and economic advantage, the boundary lines that eventually separated colonial territories were based on European concerns, not on African history or culture. Therefore, in some situations, tribal lands were cut in half between two colonies controlled by two different European nations, while in other situations two rival tribes were unwillingly brought together under the same colonial rule. For a time, the disruption of traditional tribal boundary lines worked to the Europeans' advantage because it was difficult for the native Africans to organize an opposition within each colony. But it did much more than thwart opposition; it disrupted the culture. Add in European schools, Christian missionaries, and western business practices, and traditional African culture, as elsewhere in the global colonial swirl, started breaking apart.

Possessions of

British
French
Belgian
Portugese
Italian
Spanish
Independent
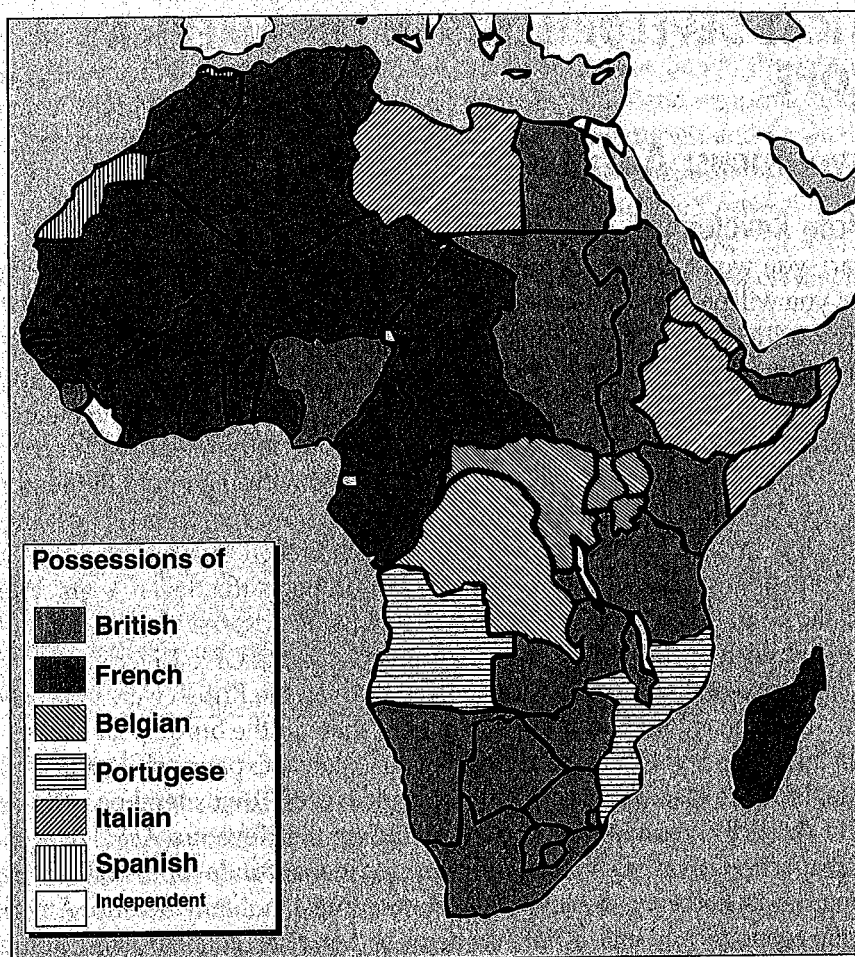
European Colonies in Africa, 1914

## Compare Them: European Colonialism in Africa and in Latin America

Colonialism in Africa was similar to that in the Americas in that boundary lines were determined by European agreements from abroad. In other words, there was total disregard for the societies that existed beforehand. Colonialism in Africa was similar to colonialism in America because multiple countries held claims to the land. Except for the colonies controlled by the British, the African colonies were governed by direct rule, similar to European rule of colonies in the Americas. This meant they sent European officials to occupy all positions of authority. Native traditions were overcome, not tolerated, and certainly not developed. This, of course, was in contrast to spheres of influence in China, for example, in which Europeans were generally more interested in making money rather than changing the entire culture.