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1871-1945

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Cambridge International AS Level

International History

1871–1945



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Introduction

Cambridge International AS Level History is a new series of three books that offer complete and thorough coverage of Cambridge International AS Level History (syllabus code 9389). Each book is aimed at one of the AS History syllabuses issued by Cambridge International Examinations for first examination in 2014. These books may also prove useful for students following other A Level courses covering similar topics. Written in clear and accessible language, *Cambridge International AS Level History – International History 1871–1945* enables students to gain the knowledge, understanding and skills to succeed in their AS Level course (and ultimately in further study and examination).

Syllabus and examination

Students wishing to take just the AS Level take two separate papers at the end of a one-year course. If they wish to take the full A Level there are two possible routes. The first is to take the two AS papers at the end of the first year and a further two A Level papers at the end of the following year. The second is to take the two AS papers as well as the two A Level papers at the end of a two-year course. For the full A Level, all four papers must be taken. The two AS papers are outlined below.

Paper 1 lasts for one hour and is based on *The Search for International Peace and Security 1919–45*. The paper will contain at least three different sources, and candidates will have to answer two questions on them. Students are not expected to have extensive historical knowledge to deal with these questions, but they are expected to be able to understand, evaluate and utilise the sources in their answers, and to have sound background knowledge of the period. In the first question (a) candidates are required to consider the sources and answer a question on one aspect of them. In the second question (b) candidates must use the sources and their own knowledge and understanding to address how far the sources support a given statement. Chapter 5 provides the appropriate level of historical knowledge to deal with Paper 1.

Paper 2 lasts for an hour and a half. This paper contains four questions, and candidates must answer two of them. Each question has two parts: part (a) requires a causal explanation; and part (b) requires consideration of significance and weighing of the relative importance of factors. A question on each of the four topics outlined in the Cambridge syllabus (for example, *International Relations 1871–1918*) will appear in every examination paper.

Examination skills

Chapter 6, which is entirely dedicated to helping students with examination skills and techniques, works through all the different types of exam questions in detail. Students should read the relevant section of the exam skills chapter *before* addressing practice questions, to remind themselves of the principles of answering each type of question. Remember that facts alone are not enough; they must be accompanied by a clear understanding of the questions and must employ a range of skills such as focused writing, evaluation and analysis.

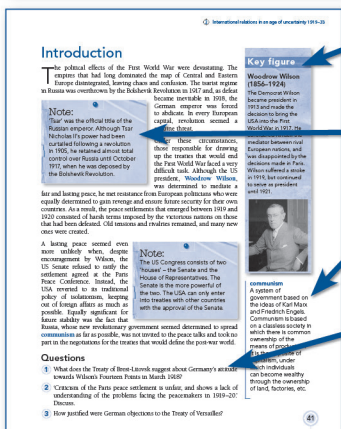
All chapters have a similar structure. Their key features are as follows:



1 **Key questions** pose thought-provoking pointers to the key issues being dealt with in the chapter.

2 **Content summary** explains the essence of a chapter.

3 **Timeline** offers an overview of significant events of the period.



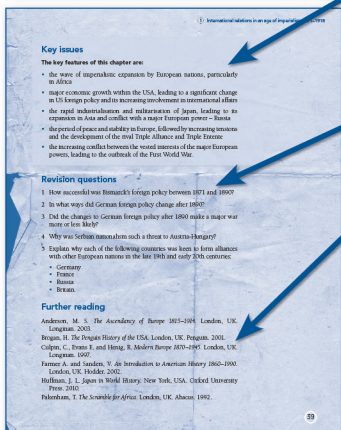
4 **Key figures** offer a detailed profile of key personalities.

5 **Notes** highlight significant points from within the text.

6 **Definitions** of key terms enhance students' understanding of the text.

7 **Questions** interspersed within the chapters help to consolidate learning.

8 **Key issues** outline the key aspects of the content that might be significant for exam preparation.



9 **Revision questions** help students assess their own understanding and skills.

10 **Further reading** provides a list of extra resources that will help with gaining a wider perspective of the topic.

Chapter

1

International relations in an age of imperialism 1871–1918

Key questions

- Why, and with what results, was there a growth in imperial expansion during the last quarter of the 19th century?
- How and why did the USA emerge as a world power during this period?
- How and why did Japan emerge as a world power during this period?
- Why, and with what results, did a system of alliances develop between European nations?

Content summary

- Reasons for imperial expansion in the late 19th century.
- The 'scramble for Africa'.
- Disputes over the crumbling Chinese Empire.
- The Spanish–American War.
- The development of American imperialism.
- The rapid modernisation of Japan.
- Japan's wars with China and Russia.
- The aims and objectives of the major European powers.
- The development of the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente.
- The implications of these alliances for international peace and stability.

Timeline

Jan 1871	Unification of Germany
Oct 1873	Three Emperors' League formed
Oct 1879	Dual Alliance formed
1880–81	First Boer War
May 1882	Triple Alliance formed
Jun 1887	Reinsurance Treaty between Germany and Russia
Dec 1893	Dual Entente agreed
Apr–Aug 1898	Spanish–American War
1899–1902	Second Boer War
Jan 1902	Anglo–Japanese Treaty signed
Apr 1904	Entente Cordiale created
1904–05	Russo–Japanese War
Aug 1907	Anglo–Russian Entente, leading to Triple Entente
Jul 1914	Outbreak of First World War

Introduction

European nations had a long tradition of increasing their wealth, prestige and power by gaining overseas possessions. As early as the 16th century, Spain had taken control of large parts of South America. In the 18th century, Britain and France had competed for territory in North America and India. By the early 19th century, Britain controlled an empire stretching from New Zealand to Canada.

The period from 1871 to 1914 witnessed a new wave of **imperialism**. This had three main characteristics:

- It was largely focused on Africa and Asia. Explorers had discovered an abundant supply of valuable minerals and raw materials in the African interior. Meanwhile, the crumbling Chinese Empire offered opportunities to increase vital trade links with the Far East.
- Although the rush to acquire new overseas possessions inevitably involved rivalry between European nations, there was a real attempt to prevent this leading to open confrontation and warfare. The Treaty of Berlin (1885), for example, effectively laid down the rules by which European nations should carry out their plans for expansion in Africa.
- The desire for overseas colonies was no longer confined to the great powers of Europe. Massive industrial growth led the USA to seek greater control over Central and South America, as well as access to trading rights in Asia. This required the development of a strong navy and the acquisition of overseas bases from which it could operate. At the same time, Japan experienced its own industrial and military revolutions, which enabled the country to seek greater power and influence within Asia. This brought Japan into direct conflict with one of the major European powers – Russia – and made subsequent rivalry with the USA more likely.

imperialism

The policy of extending a nation's power by gaining political and economic control over more territory. This is sometimes referred to as colonialism.

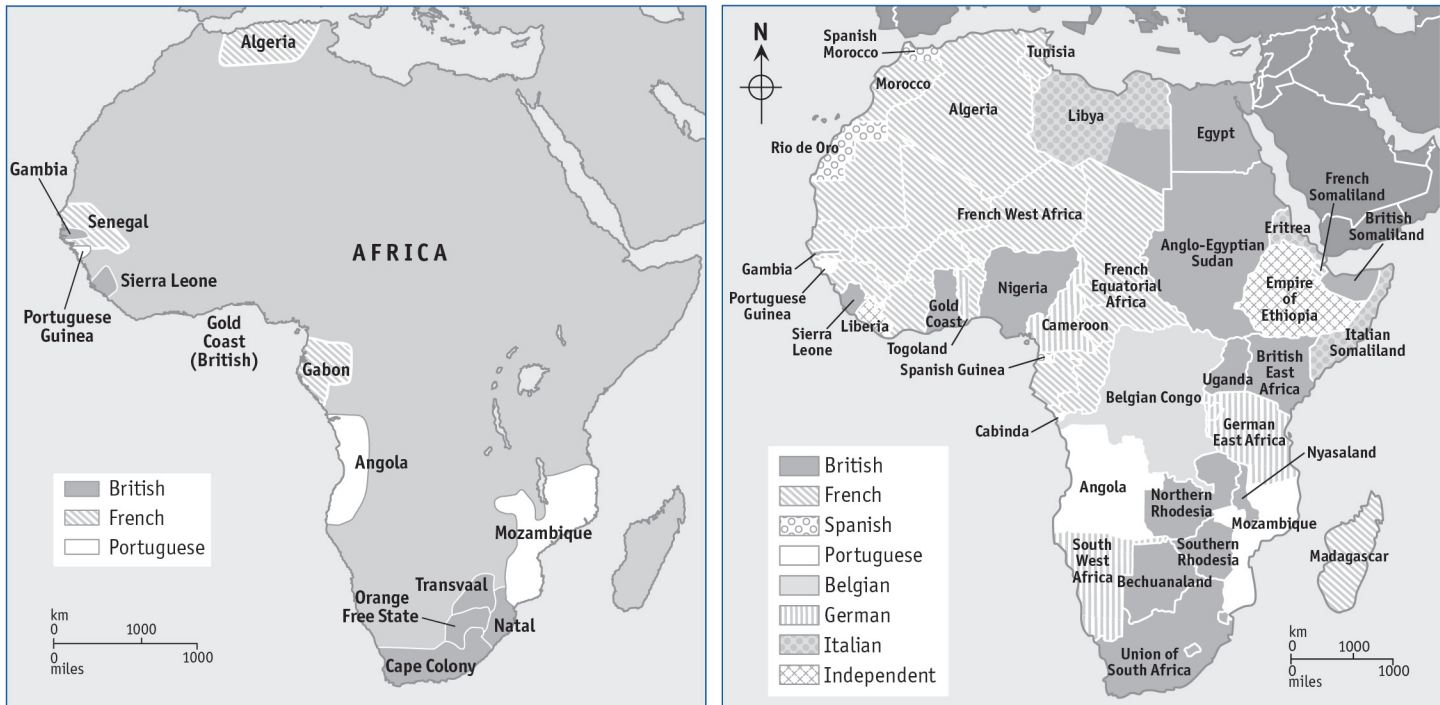
Figure 1.1 Japanese soldiers in the trenches during the Russo–Japanese War in 1905



The 'scramble for Africa'

In 1871, only 10% of Africa was under direct European control, most of it in the coastal regions. The next 30 years witnessed the rapid colonisation of Africa by European powers – a rush for land that contemporary journalists labelled the 'scramble for Africa'. By 1900, over 90% of the African continent was under the colonial rule of European nations.

Figure 1.2 Two maps showing African colonies in 1871 (left) and 1914 (right)



Causes of the 'scramble for Africa'

Historians have long debated the reasons for this rapid growth of imperialism, and have found it difficult to agree on a single cause. Several different – though interrelated – factors were involved, which are outlined below.

Strategic factors

Trade routes with India were vital for Britain. In the early 19th century, the British won control of Cape Colony in southern Africa, and established a port there on the key sea trading route with India. In 1869, the Suez Canal was opened, linking the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea across Egyptian territory. This meant that steamships could travel to and from India without passing round the southern tip of Africa. However, the instability of the Egyptian government threatened this new trading route and so, in 1882, Britain reluctantly took over the administration of Egypt. Many historians believe that it was the establishment of British power in Egypt that triggered the 'scramble for Africa'.

Medical advancement and exploration

In the 18th century, Africa was known as ‘the white man’s grave’ because of the dangers of diseases such as malaria. The medicine quinine, discovered by French scientists in 1817, proved an effective treatment for malaria, and as fears of contracting and dying of African diseases reduced, more

people ventured to the ‘Dark Continent’. Countless expeditions began to remove some of the myths associated with Africa. Explorers were often financed by wealthy businessmen, keen to find new resources and trading opportunities. One of the most famous explorers, Henry Morton Stanley, was hired by the king of Belgium, **Leopold II**, to secure treaties with local chieftains along the course of the Congo River.

Note:

The expression ‘Dark Continent’ was widely used by Europeans in the 19th century to describe Africa. The name was not given because of the skin colour of its inhabitants, but because of the mystery surrounding the continent. Europeans knew very little about Africa, other than that it seemed to be a dangerous and inhospitable place.

Weaponry

The development of fast-firing rifles, machine guns and heavy artillery gave Europeans a distinct advantage over poorly armed Africans. Land on the continent could be taken with little effective resistance from the native people.

Political factors

By 1871, the map of Europe had been settled and the borders of European countries agreed. Only war could change these, and this was something that all nations were keen to avoid. With no possibility of expansion within Europe itself, countries needed to look overseas in order to increase their wealth, power, prestige and influence. Africa offered the ideal opportunity.

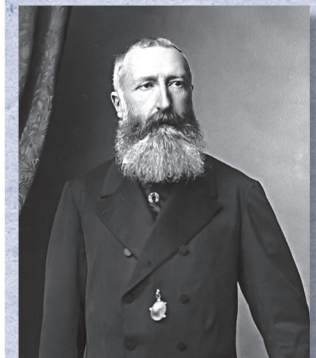
The abolition of the slave trade

Much of Europe’s early contact with Africa had occurred because of the slave trade. From as early as the 16th century, ships had sailed from European ports to the coast of Africa. There the Europeans would acquire slaves, either by bartering with local chieftains or simply by capturing native people. The human cargo was then shipped across the Atlantic Ocean and sold to plantation owners in the USA to work as slaves picking cotton or tobacco. By 1871, however, slavery had been abolished in most countries. Denied the huge profits they had gained from the slave trade, many European businessmen sought other forms of trade with Africa.

Key figure

Leopold II (1835–1909)

Leopold was king of Belgium 1865–1909. He financed the colonisation of the Congo Free State (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), which he exploited in order to make money from ivory and rubber. Leopold’s regime in Africa was characterised by cruelty towards the native inhabitants, and he was eventually forced to hand control of the colony over to the Belgian government in 1908.



The Industrial Revolution

The rapid increase in the production of manufactured goods associated with the European Industrial Revolution created a need for more raw materials, new markets and greater investment opportunities. In Africa, explorers located vast reserves of raw materials, plotted trade routes and identified population centres that could provide a market for European goods. Meanwhile, developments in railways and steamships made travel both quicker and safer. Iron-hulled, steam-driven ships (which, unlike sailing ships, did not need deep hulls for stability and did not depend on wind power) were able to navigate rivers such as the Congo, the Zambezi and the Niger, offering easier access to the African interior.

A sense of duty

Convinced of their racial superiority, many Europeans believed that they had a duty to bring order, stability and Christianity to the lives of the ‘pagan’ Africans. The missionary-explorer David Livingstone, for example, argued that it was essential to introduce Africans to the ‘three Cs’ – commerce, Christianity and civilisation. The British politician Lord Curzon echoed these sentiments when he justified the expansion of Britain’s empire in a speech in 1907.

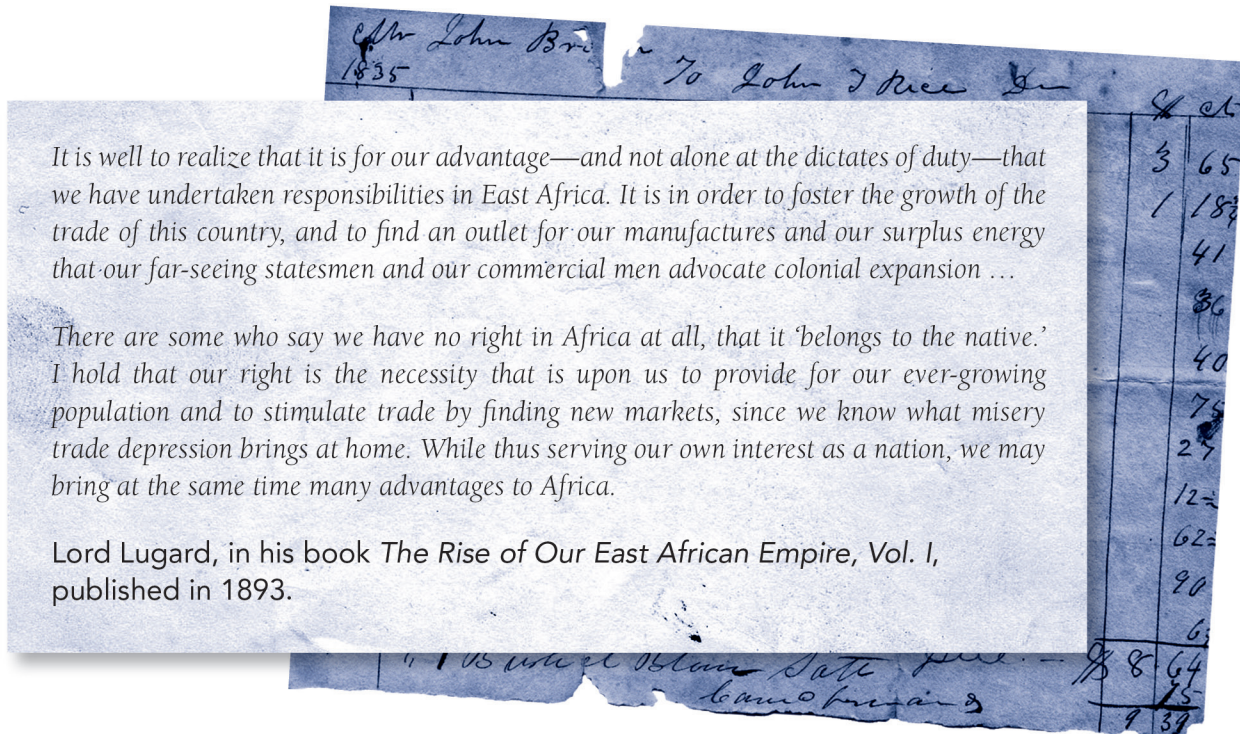
Wherever the British Empire has extended its borders, misery and oppression, anarchy and destitution, superstition and bigotry have tended to disappear, and they have been replaced by peace, justice, prosperity, humanity and freedom of thought, speech and action.

Lord Curzon, in a speech entitled ‘The True Imperialism’, given at Birmingham Town Hall, 1907.

Note:

In the early 19th century, scientists such as Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau developed theories regarding the classification of races. White people were classified as racially superior to other groups. These views, presented through poor science and clearly motivated by political and ideological factors, were widely accepted both in Europe and in the USA.

The claim that Britain and other European nations were taking possession of land in Africa in order to improve the lives of African people provided a convenient justification for actions that were, in reality, motivated by self-interest and characterised by exploitation. Lord Lugard, a British soldier and explorer who was later governor of the British colony of Nigeria, gave a more honest assessment of Britain’s involvement in Africa.



While recognising that Africans may have benefited from the British presence on their continent, Lord Lugard openly accepted that Britain’s main motive was to serve ‘our own interest as a nation’ by enhancing trade. It is interesting to note that he clearly sees nothing wrong in this, claiming that it was Britain’s ‘right’ to take such action and quickly dismissing the views of those who argue that Africa ‘belongs to the native’. In asserting that Britain had every right to take possession of African land in order to address its own national interests, Lord Lugard was clearly implying that the rights and needs of Europeans outweighed those of Africans. In this, he was conforming to the widespread belief in European racial superiority.



Figure 1.3 A satirical cartoon from 1899 showing Africans carrying figures from the USA and Britain (Uncle Sam and John Bull) who represent ‘civilisation’

The rush for African territory

Key figure

Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902)

Rhodes was a British-born businessman who made a fortune from the extraction of diamonds in South Africa. He was prime minister of Cape Colony between 1890 and 1896, and a strong supporter of British imperialism in Africa. However, he believed that British settlers and local governors in Africa should be in charge, rather than being ruled from London.

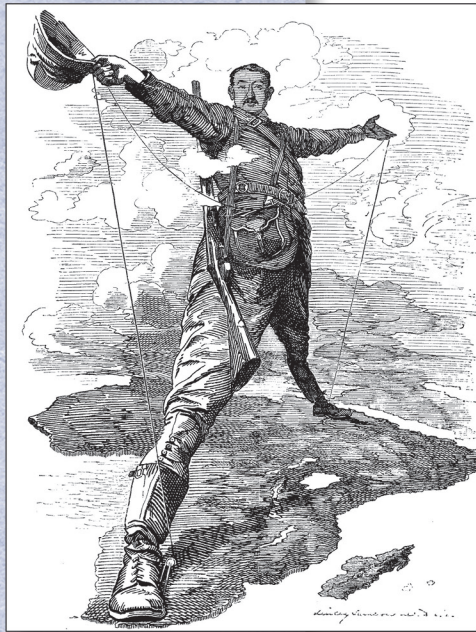


Figure 1.4 A cartoon of Cecil Rhodes, published in the British magazine *Punch* in 1892; it links Rhodes' name with the ancient statue known as the *Colossus of Rhodes*

In addition to the general factors discussed in the previous section, each European nation had its own particular motives for involvement in Africa:

- **Britain:** Britain's original concern had been to protect its vital Indian Ocean trading routes, and this explains its interest in Egypt and South Africa. The discovery of gold, diamonds and valuable minerals in the Transvaal alerted Britain to the economic rewards of acquiring more land in Africa. Determined to stop other European countries, particularly France and Germany, from gaining these mineral-rich areas for themselves, Britain moved quickly to secure as much of East Africa as possible. Encouraged by imperialist adventurers such as **Cecil Rhodes**, Britain took possession of most of East Africa in the last 20 years of the 19th century. This included Egypt, Sudan, British East Africa (Kenya and Uganda), British Somaliland, Southern and Northern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe and Zambia), Bechuanaland (Botswana), Orange Free State and the Transvaal (South Africa), Gambia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, British Gold Coast (Ghana) and Nyasaland (Malawi). These countries accounted for more than 30% of Africa's population. Rhodes' ambition in Africa was to build a railway and telegraph line from Cairo in the north to the Cape in the south, thus reinforcing Britain's commercial gain from its African possessions.
- **France:** while Britain concentrated on East Africa, France was more active in the west and north-west of the continent. As a result of involvement in the slave trade, France had established secure control of the coastal regions of Senegal and Algeria. In the late 19th century, the French moved inland in search of raw materials, such as palm oil and timber, and new markets for their industrial output. French politicians believed the development of a large overseas empire was essential to enhancing their country's wealth, prestige and power.
- **Belgium:** Belgium had only won independence from the Netherlands in 1830, and King Leopold II (see page 9) was determined to increase his own wealth and put his country on the map by claiming the enormous Congo basin. The king was prepared to use his own money to pay for a colony that was considerably larger than Belgium itself.
- **Portugal:** determined not to be left behind in the race to acquire African land, Portugal reasserted its long-established claims to Angola and Mozambique.
- **Germany:** Germany did not enter the 'scramble' until 1881, when pressure from businessmen and industrialists forced the government to change its previous policy of opposition to colonising distant lands. A frenzy of activity left Germany in control of Kamerun (Cameroon and part of Nigeria), German East Africa (Rwanda, Burundi and most of Tanzania),

German South West Africa (Namibia) and Togoland (Togo and part of Ghana). By the time Germany entered the race for African possessions, most of the profitable areas had already been taken by other nations, and Germany's colonies in East Africa cost the country considerably more than they were worth.

The Treaty of Berlin 1885

The 'scramble for Africa' may have begun for logical strategic and commercial reasons, but it rapidly descended into a mad rush for overseas possessions. European countries seemed determined to seize as much African land as possible – regardless of its potential value – simply to prevent it falling into the hands of their rivals. It had become an issue of national pride.

This naturally opened up the risk of direct conflict breaking out between competing nations. In an attempt to prevent this, representatives from 13 European states met at the Berlin Conference in 1884–85. Together, they reached an agreement regarding the parts of Africa in which each country had the right to pursue ownership of land without interference. The resulting Treaty of Berlin was designed to regulate European colonisation and trade in Africa. The main articles of the treaty established that:

- in order to take possession of an African territory, a European nation would have to inform other governments of its claim immediately, and demonstrate that the territory was **'effectively occupied'**
- free passage should be given to all ships on the Niger and Congo rivers
- slavery should be abolished throughout the continent.

In many ways, the outcome of the Berlin Conference added further impetus to the race for new land. In particular, there was a clash between the rival ambitions of France and Britain. While France was expanding rapidly eastwards from French West Africa towards its possession in Somaliland, the British were expanding southwards from Egypt towards the Cape. Their paths crossed in Sudan. In 1898, a French expedition under Major Marchand met a British force, led by Lord Kitchener, in the village of Fashoda. Both claimed Sudan for their respective countries. For a time open conflict seemed likely, but in the end neither country was prepared to go to war over Africa, and they reached a compromise. France recognised British possession of Egypt and Sudan, while Britain formally acknowledged the French presence in Morocco. Events such as the Fashoda Incident have led many historians to see the 'scramble for Africa' as a safety valve – a way for European nations to play out their game of power politics without the risk of a major war.

'effectively occupied'

This meant that the land was genuinely under the control of the European nation – it could be properly administered and defended. This was intended to prevent a country claiming an area over which it had no real control simply to prevent rivals attempting to gain it.

Note:

The agreement that slavery should be abolished throughout Africa was included in the treaty to satisfy those who had doubts about the right of European countries simply to take land in Africa. Abolishing slavery provided a suitable justification.

The Boer Wars

As the British experience in South Africa soon demonstrated, ownership of African colonies was neither peaceful nor without far-reaching consequences. Maintaining control of Cape Colony involved constant border wars with native tribes, notably in the Anglo–Zulu War of 1879. Moreover,

British rule was resented by the Boers – farmers of Dutch descent – who moved inland to settle in Orange Free State and the Transvaal. In 1877, Britain claimed possession of the gold and diamond-rich Transvaal. However, once assured that the Zulu threat had been removed, the Transvaal Boers rebelled and claimed independence. The First Boer War (1880–81) was little more than a series of skirmishes, in which the ill-prepared British troops were defeated. Under the terms of the Pretoria Convention (1881), the Transvaal and Orange Free State were given self-governing status under British oversight.

Note:

The Anglo–Zulu War was fought in 1879 between the British Empire and the Zulu Kingdom. Following a series of bloody battles, including an opening victory for the Zulus at Isandlwana, the British were eventually victorious.

Key figure

Paul Kruger (1825–1904)

Kruger was president of the South African Republic (Transvaal) from 1883 to 1900. After the First Boer War, Kruger played a role in negotiations with Britain to restore self-government to the region. He later led the Boers in their struggle against Britain during the Second Boer War.



Further discoveries of gold deposits in the Transvaal drew many new settlers to the region – most of them British. However, these newcomers were denied political and economic rights by the Transvaal president, **Paul Kruger**. British expansionist ambitions, encouraged mainly by the prime minister of Cape Colony, Cecil Rhodes (see page 12), led to the failed Jameson Raid of 1895. The British government hoped that the settlers in the region would rebel against the Transvaal government, and the intention was for British forces – led by the statesman Leander Starr Jameson – to go to their assistance as a pretext for invasion. However, when the rebellion failed to materialise, Jameson led his forces into the Transvaal anyway. They were swiftly driven back by the Boers.

Other European nations resented this British invasion of what they regarded as a small, independent nation. The German Kaiser, Wilhelm (William) II (see page 30), even sent a telegram to Kruger, congratulating him on defeating the raiders. This caused huge indignation in Britain and resulted in a deterioration in Anglo–German relations.

In 1899, Kruger demanded the withdrawal of British troops and full independence for the Transvaal. When Britain refused to grant this, Kruger declared war. After a series of early victories by the Boers, Britain dramatically increased the number of troops in South Africa. They succeeded in relieving several besieged cities, and captured the Transvaal capital, Pretoria, in June 1900. After this, the Boers adopted guerrilla tactics – carrying out surprise raids on British-held railways and storage depots – but after two further years of fighting the Boers were forced to surrender. Britain's victory in this, the Second Boer War, was confirmed by the Treaty of Vereeniging (1902), which placed Orange Free State and the Transvaal firmly under British control.

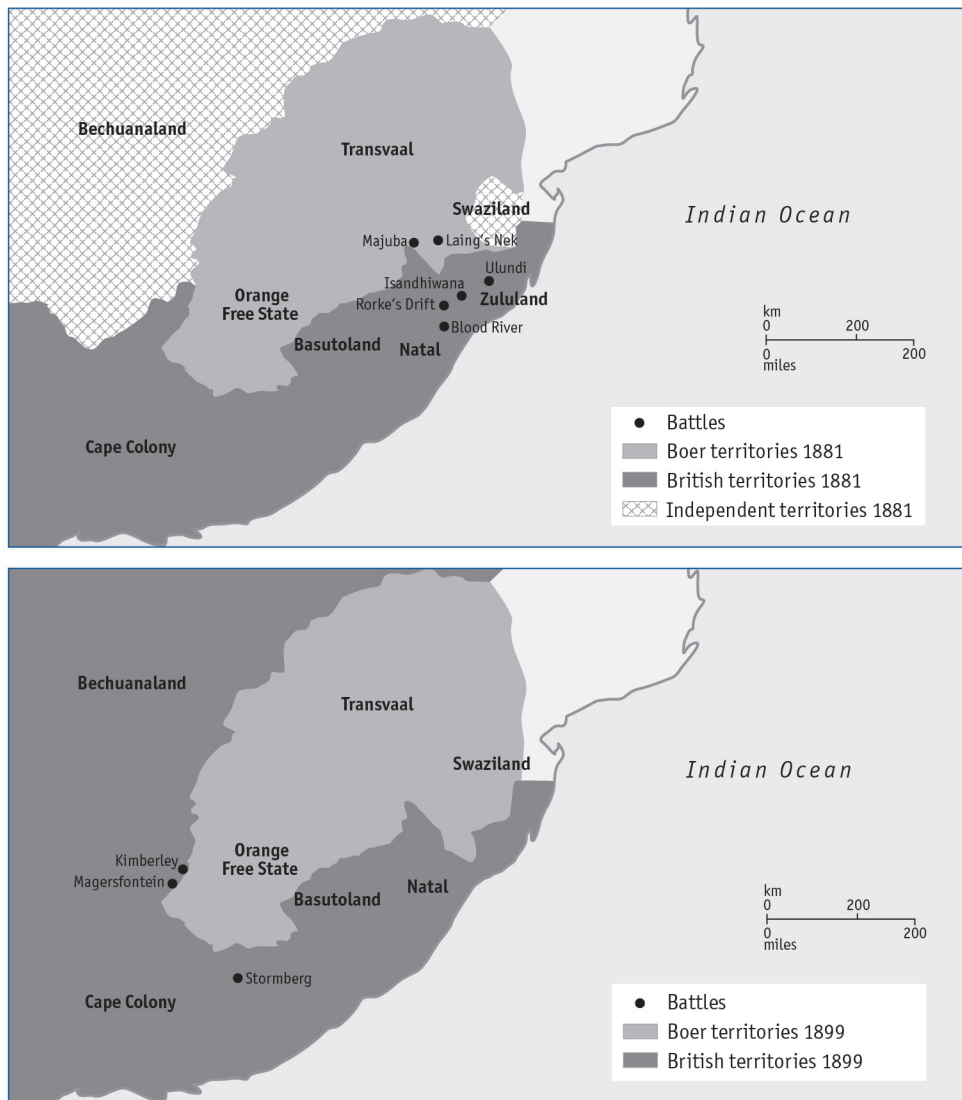


Figure 1.5 Two maps showing South Africa during the Boer Wars, in 1880–81 (top) and 1899–1902 (bottom)

However, victory came at a price. The power of the British Empire had been severely challenged by a relatively small number of Boers, revealing fundamental weaknesses in the British army. The Second Boer War cost the taxpayer more than £200 million – a huge amount of money at the beginning of the 20th century – and 22,000 soldiers of the British Empire died. In addition, Britain was condemned by the international community for its **'scorched earth' policy** during the war, and for the establishment of concentration camps in which the wives and children of Boer fighters were imprisoned. These camps were originally intended to be refugee centres for civilians left homeless by the fighting, but conditions there were poor and they were administered harshly in the hope that this would force the Boers to surrender. With bad hygiene and little food, suffering and death were commonplace in the camps, and 30,000 civilians died during the war.

'scorched earth' policy

This is a battle tactic in which an army burns crops and property in an area to deny the enemy food and shelter.