

In the Boer War (1899–1902) the British settlers, supported by the Imperial government in London, fought the two Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. The war proved far more difficult to win than expected. According to Kipling, it taught the British 'no end of a lesson', and certainly it dented 'jingo imperialism' in Britain. The continental press rejoiced at every setback to British arms, revealing how unpopular Britain, the leading imperial Power in the world, had become. Her European rivals even discussed schemes for a 'Continental League' directed against her, though British seapower acted as a powerful deterrent to such projects.

In the period 1900–1914 Africa ceased to be an object of serious rivalry amongst the Great Powers. The main exception was North Africa, but even here the rivalry took a different form from that of previous decades. Germany twice challenged France's position in Morocco (in 1905 and 1911) but it was not for the sake of territorial designs on Morocco itself (see pages 83 and 89). Italy's attempt to seize Tripoli (in Libya) in 1911 led to a conflict with Turkey, but the other Powers did not become involved in it, because they did not want Turkey to be weakened any further.

It is clear that a striking feature of the Scramble for Africa was the assertion of European political influence or control over vast tracts of territory, regardless of its current profitability. In China, on the other hand, a genuine 'economic imperialism' can be observed in this same period.

4 Great Power Rivalries in China

KEY ISSUES Why did the Great Powers compete with each other in China? Why was there no partition?

a) An Overview

For a decade after 1895, the Far East became the main focus of international rivalry. Britain's dominant position in trade with China, that stretched back over half a century, was being challenged by other European states. As the economic competition intensified, the rivalry developed political overtones.

The 'Far Eastern Crisis', as some writers call it, began with China's defeat by Japan in 1895 and ended with Japan's victory over Russia in 1905. The revelation of China's weakness at the earlier date led to a short-lived 'scramble for concessions' by the Great Powers. This was followed by territorial demands. China seemed to be in danger of being partitioned. But the fact that only two of the powers, Russia and Japan, had serious designs on Chinese territory is an important reason why China avoided Africa's fate. During this decade of crisis, Britain attempted to set limits to the growth of Russian influence over

China and signed an alliance with Japan in 1902, after Germany had made plain her unwillingness to restrain Russia. The Russo-Japanese war of 1904–5 ended the decade of rivalry and tension amongst the Powers in the Far East.

b) Economic Motivations

The main interest of Britain, France and Germany in China was economic. Certainly, from a geographical viewpoint, they had no strategic interest in this distant part of the world. Yet although it seems clear that trade and investment were the dominant motives for the western Powers' involvement, the trade statistics do not seem to justify all the trouble and effort involved in opening up China to western penetration. The explanation is that China had a population of over 400 million and therefore constituted a vast potential market for manufactured goods. It was this that made the Powers persevere. As late as 1898, a British minister described China as 'the most hopeful place of the future for the commerce of our country'. But even though Britain had about 70 per cent of China's trade, the reality was that her dealings with China represented only about 3 per cent of her total trade in 1885.

On the other hand, in the 1880s China did seem to offer good investment opportunities for European capital. To western eyes, China was ripe for modernisation. As late as 1880 she had no railways and few modern industries or public utilities, such as gas or water companies. Western business firms and banking interests therefore became engaged in a battle for contracts and 'concessions' for mining rights or railway construction. This commercial competition gave a political dimension to the rivalry of the Powers because success in securing economic concessions was seen as a reflection of the political influence that each Power exerted in Peking (today's Beijing). This is shown by the comment made by a British minister in 1898 about a tussle over a railway concessions: 'We are really fighting a battle for prestige rather than for material gain'.

c) Russia and Japan

In the case of Russia and Japan, however, political considerations went far beyond mere prestige. Although the main objective of the Russians was to establish an economic preponderance in Manchuria (see the map on page 55) to assist Russia's industrial development, its realisation depended on establishing political control over this northerly province of China.

Japan's response to western imperialism had been to embark on a policy of modernisation, to take advantage of western ideas and technology. By the 1890s she possessed a modern navy and a reorganised army. In 1894 she felt strong enough to back her claims over Korea,

a Chinese dependency, by force. She rapidly secured control of the sea between Korea and north China and occupied parts of mainland China as well as Korea.

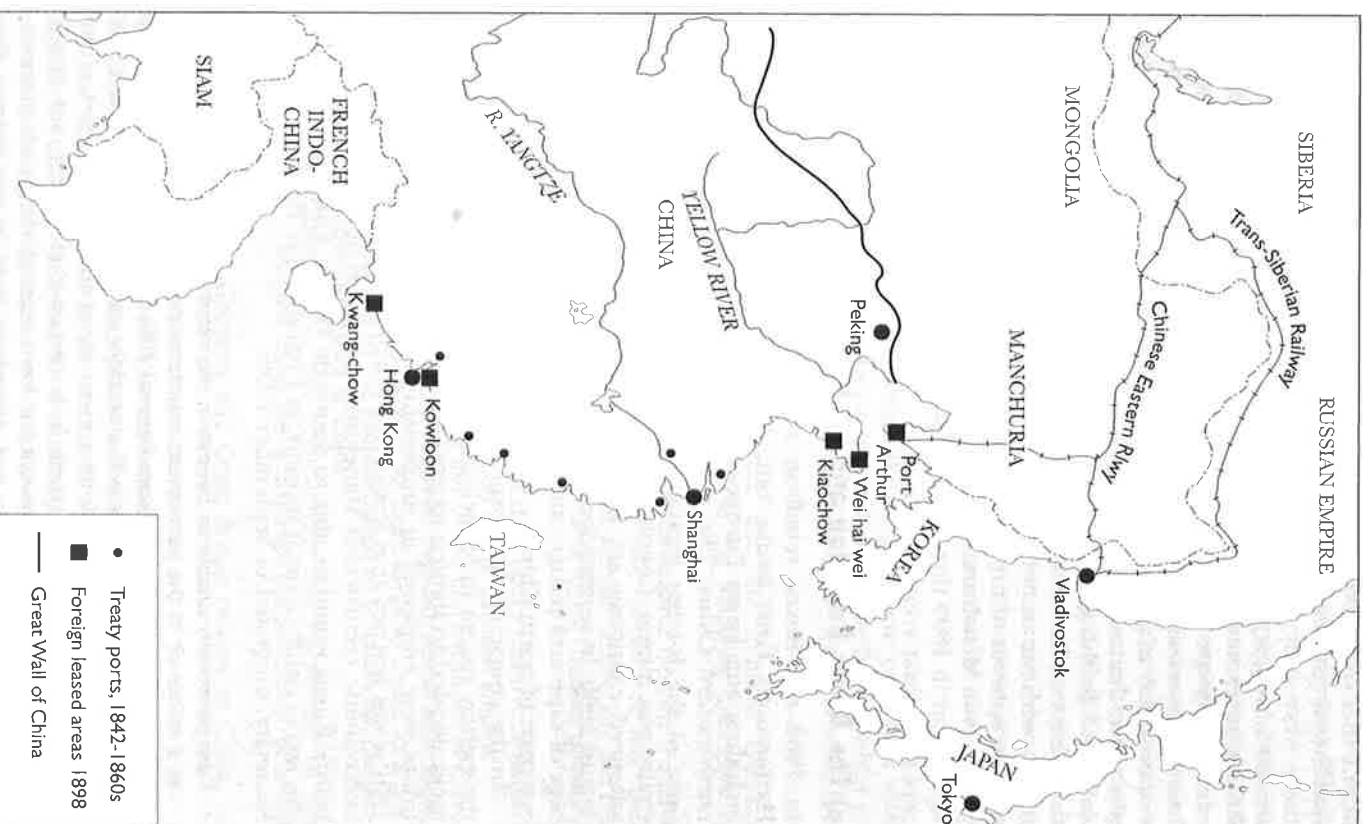
Japan's sudden and unexpected defeat of China in the war of 1894–95, however, transformed the situation in the Far East. Japan was clearly now a force to be reckoned with. In fact the Russians were so alarmed at Japan's territorial gains in southern Manchuria, on which Russia herself had designs, that they insisted on a moderation of Japan's demands in the peace treaty. Japan was thus obliged to return some territory to China, in exchange for a larger financial indemnity. Russia's plan was to create a 'special relationship' with China by posing as her friend and saviour against the Japanese; and, in return for a large loan, she obtained valuable economic concessions in Manchuria.

d) The Scramble for China

The war of 1894–95 not only revealed China's weakness but also made her heavily dependent on foreign loans. The result was a 'scramble for concessions', which at times bordered on the absurd. When this 'midsummer madness' had abated in 1898, Britain, for example, had acquired concessions to build 2,800 miles of railways – of which only a few hundred miles had been constructed by 1907. But it also had its more serious side. Russia secured important privileges, including the right to build a railway across Manchuria, greatly reducing the distance from Siberia to Vladivostok. The other Powers also obtained railway and mining concessions. Each nation seemed to be carving out a 'sphere of interest', a trend accentuated by the move towards demanding exclusive privileges for that nation in its sphere. While Russia was attempting to dominate northern China, especially Manchuria, France was most active in the south, adjacent to her empire in Indo-China. Meanwhile Britain, traditionally the advocate of a free trade ('Open Door') policy, was seeking to preserve her long-established position in central China, especially the Yangtze basin. Her most serious competitor here was Germany, whose main area of activity was Shantung province in the north-east. By 1898, therefore, the partition of China into spheres of economic interest seemed to be imminent.

How did China avoid Africa's fate of being partitioned? One factor was that China was a unitary state with a dynasty and a sense of nationhood that Africa lacked. The Chinese authorities also attempted to weaken the trend towards 'spheres' by granting concessions that cut across them. Another factor was the treaty port system. By the 1890s, Europeans could trade at over 30 treaty ports and also enjoyed reasonable access to the interior. In short, political control was not necessary for the sake of trade.

From the European point of view there were two other consider-



ations that operated against partition. First, the realisation dawned that they might lose more than they gained from it. The fact was that there were only two 'plums' (Manchuria and the Yangtze) to be shared amongst four Powers. The second consideration was the British government's refusal to yield to the clamour of British mercantile interests to create an exclusively British zone in central China because, as was said, 'We are not prepared to undertake the immense responsibility of governing what is practically a third of China'. India was more than enough of a headache without adding to such burdens. The British government therefore, encouraged by an American declaration in favour of the Open Door policy, began successful negotiations with her western rivals to give up demands for exclusive rights in their spheres of interest. With Russia, who refused to give up her privileges in Manchuria, the best the British could do was to secure an agreement in 1899 that eased tension but accepted the spheres concept for railway construction.

e) The Boxer Rebellion and its Impact

In 1900 the Boxer rebellion (organised by the Society of the Harmonious Fists) broke out. Anti-foreigner agitation and riots, including attacks on Europeans and their property, swept through north-eastern China. The most dramatic event was the seven-week siege of the foreign legations, or embassies, in Peking. European rivalry was almost forgotten – temporarily. An international force advanced cautiously on the capital and relieved the legations in August 1900. In reprisal for the atrocities, Peking was subjected to an orgy of rape and pillage, and punitive expeditions were sent to various parts of north China.

In the course of the Boxer rebellion, much damage was done to the railway system in Manchuria. In retaliation the Russian government decided to tighten its grip on the province. Large numbers of troops were employed in suppressing Boxers and 'bandits'. In early 1901 it was learned that Russia had obtained virtual political, as well as economic, control over Manchuria. It seemed only a matter of time before Russia would be able to dominate Peking. One way to prevent this was to enlist German support, as Chamberlain, Britain's Colonial Secretary, suggested in September 1900:

I am personally unable to believe in the reform of the Chinese Empire as a whole or in the permanent maintenance of its territorial integrity. Unless Russia breaks up from internal difficulties, of which there is no present sign, I believe she will ultimately secure Northern China, and that the 'Open Door' will be a mere name so far as this part of the Chinese Empire is concerned. It is certain that we are not strong enough by ourselves to prevent her from accomplishing such an annexation, and both in China and elsewhere it is in our interest that

Germany should throw herself across the path of Russia ... The clash of German and Russian interests, whether in China or Asia Minor, would be guarantee for our safety.

I think then our policy clearly is to encourage good relations between ourselves and Germany, as well as between ourselves and Japan and the United States ... We should, without urging it, let it be known that we shall put no obstacle in the way of German expansion in Shantung, nor in the way of the gratification of Japan's ambition in Korea. But, in return, we should obtain written assurances recognising our claim to predominant interest and influence in the Yang-Tse Valley. We are not likely ever to want to take possession of any territory in the interior ourselves; but we ought to try for some understanding which will keep off all others, and make it easy to maintain the 'Open Door' in at least this, the most important portion of the Chinese Empire.

In October 1900 the Germans signed an Agreement on China with Britain. To the British, the Germans had committed themselves to help defend the *status quo* throughout China, as the terms of the treaty seemed to imply:

Her Britannic Majesty's Government and the Imperial German Government ... have agreed to observe the following principles in regard to their mutual policy in China:

1. It is a matter of joint and permanent international interest that the ports on the rivers and littoral of China should remain free and open to trade ... for the nationals of all countries without distinction; and the two governments agree ... to uphold the same for all Chinese territory as far as they can exercise influence.

2. [The two governments] will ... direct their policy towards maintaining undiminished the territorial condition of the Chinese Empire.

3. In case of another Power making use of the complications in China in order to obtain under any form whatever such territorial advantages, the two Contracting Parties reserve to themselves to come to a preliminary understanding as to the eventual steps to be taken for the protection of their own interests in China.

4. The two Governments will communicate this Agreement to the other Powers ... and will invite them to accept the principles recorded in it.

AGREEMENT between Germany and Great Britain relative to China. 16 October, 1900.

But British expectations of German support were dashed in March 1901 when Germany made plain her 'absolute indifference' to the fate of Manchuria, which, she claimed, was outside the scope of the agreement. Japan was more forthcoming, because Russia still refused to concede to her the same predominance in Korea that Russia was now establishing in Manchuria.

In 1902 an Anglo-Japanese Alliance was signed. It recognised Japan's special interests in Korea while supporting the integrity of China. The two allies agreed to aid each other if one of them was attacked by two or more Powers. Strengthened by this assurance of support against a Franco-Russian combination, Japan was able to take a firm line in her negotiations with Russia. When these proved inconclusive, Japan launched a surprise attack against Russian forces in the Far East in February 1904. The war ended in 1905 after sweeping Japanese victories both on land and at sea.

The Russo-Japanese war brought to an end the possibility of Russian domination of northern China. The main threat to China's political independence was thereby removed and her territorial integrity ceased to be an issue of major concern to the Great Powers. For the European Powers, therefore, the Far East ceased to be a source of serious tension.

f) Conclusion

The activities of the Powers in China provide a useful illustration of at least two aspects of imperialism. Firstly, the growing competitiveness for economic advantages turned into a form of political rivalry. Western imperialism in China consequently gave the appearance of being a battle for prestige rather than tangible economic benefits. Secondly, and somewhat paradoxically, the main interest of the European Powers (with the possible exception of Russia) remained nevertheless the exploitation of the commercial and financial opportunities that China offered. In contrast to Africa, where the European states acquired vast tracts of territory, the activities of the western Powers in the Far East can best be described as 'economic imperialism'.

5 Explanations of Imperialism

KEY ISSUE What factors motivated the upsurge of imperial activity?

a) Economic Interpretations

An English radical, J. A. Hobson, writing in 1902, asserted that imperialism was nothing less than a conspiracy promoted by financiers for their own enrichment. That Hobson should suspect that sinister forces lay behind the annexation of tropical lands is understandable. As he noted, the volume of trade between Britain and these new colonies was small and its profits low. By contrast, Britain's capital investments overseas had greatly increased since 1870 – and Hobson drew the conclusion that Britain acquired colonies to protect this cap-

ital investment. Yet his conclusions are no longer convincing. The statistics now available do indeed show that large amounts of British capital were invested abroad, but only a very small proportion went to the territories which subsequently became colonies. Most of it went to the Americas, Australia or old colonies such as India. Hobson was therefore in error in believing that a causal link existed between the acquisition of new colonies and the large increase in overseas investment.

Partial support for the Hobson thesis came in the early-1990s from Peter Cain and Anthony Hopkins, who argued the importance of 'gentlemanly capitalism' ('an alliance ... between the City, southern investors and the landed interest') in producing African partition. They showed that governments were more influenced by the financiers of the City of London (men of the same social and educational elite as the politicians) than by northern industrialists. These were the men who had financial interests abroad, sometimes in Africa, and who encouraged the politicians to raise the Union Jack to protect that investment. It is a challenging idea, though one which sometimes fails to fit all the facts.

Another theorist whose ideas now seem inadequate is the Russian Communist leader Lenin. Writing in 1916–17, he linked imperialism with 'monopoly capitalism'. Once capitalism had matured, the banks controlled both manufacturing industry and governments; and, in their endless search for higher profits, the financiers directed governments to partition Africa to secure valuable raw materials. Yet his views about the nature of capitalism seem inappropriate. Even in France and Britain, monopolies were not nearly as powerful as Lenin insisted, and in industrially backward states, like Russia and Italy, governments were far less influenced by financiers. More fundamentally, Lenin's interpretation is logically flawed. He clearly dates the emergence of 'monopoly finance capitalism' at about 1900. Since he asserts that this was the motive force behind imperialism, it cannot logically be used to explain colonial acquisitions made *before* that date – as most of them were.

Yet notions of 'economic imperialism' are by no means dead. In the late nineteenth century, European commercial and financial interests were active throughout the world – in the Far East, Latin America, North America, the Near East and Africa – and trading conditions undoubtedly became increasingly competitive. Industrialisation in Germany and France led to an increase in the output of manufactured goods, while the so-called 'Great Depression' of 1873–96 signified a fall in demand for such products. Hence there was a search for markets for manufactures.

Conditions for Britain were undoubtedly difficult. In the 1880s, British chambers of commerce were talking in terms of a 'crisis of over-production'. The problem for British manufacturers was aggravated because, while Britain clung to free trade, Germany and France adopted protective tariffs. Britain's domestic market and also her

colonial markets were open to her rivals, but these rivals proceeded to introduce discriminatory duties against British goods. In the 1890s, when French tariffs were greatly increased, British merchants warned the government that 'Free Trade abroad and prosperity at home were inextricably bound up with imperial expansion'. Several historians see a causal link, in Britain's case, between imperialism and the search to defend trade. Prime Minister Lord Salisbury justified annexing some areas on the grounds that 'we only desire territory because we desire commercial freedom'. This view was expressed quite explicitly by a British official: 'We are forced to extend our direct political influence over a large part of Africa to secure a fair field and no favour for our commerce'. Pressure from German merchants was also one factor that explains Bismarck's sudden interest in Africa in the mid-1880s. By 1890, however, political considerations were foremost, as shown by his remark 'my map of Africa lies in Europe'.

b) Non-Economic Explanations

Many historians are sceptical about the relevance of universal economic theories to explain late-nineteenth-century imperialism. They give greater emphasis to political factors to explain expansion. Increasing attention is also being paid to the 'peripheral' situation – the role of the non-European societies themselves.

Colonial rivalries can be regarded as a transference on to a world stage of the Great Power rivalries that had mostly been confined to Europe and the Near East from 1815 to 1870. It was obviously safer to play out these rivalries in distant lands than in Europe itself. A contemporary observer remarked that 'the great powers are dividing up the continent of Africa... in the same manner that they would partition countries such as Poland'. The well-established system of conference diplomacy was also applied to the new rivalries in Africa in the form of the Berlin Conference of 1884–85. Contemporaries were very conscious of Great Power competition in Africa. The French politician Jules Ferry likened it to 'a steepchase moving headlong towards an unknown destination, accelerating as if propelled by its own speed'. This competitiveness encouraged the tendency towards 'preclusive' imperialism – annexing territory, not because it was valuable economically, but merely to forestall a rival.

Imperialism was also closely linked to prestige. Colonies came to be regarded as status symbols. Great Power status, previously measured in terms of population, military capacity and industrial strength, now came to include overseas possessions. Caprivi, Bismarck's successor, said many Germans believed that 'once we came into possession of colonies, then purchased an atlas and coloured the continent of Africa blue, we would become a great people'. The acquisition of Tunisia by France in 1880–81 was hailed as a sign that 'France is recovering her position as a great power'.

In the 1890s public opinion in Britain and elsewhere became an added force behind imperial expansion. 'Jingoism', an assertive form of nationalism, was encouraged (if not promoted) by the popular press. For example, the *Daily Mail* capitalised on 'the depth and volume of public interest in Imperial questions' of its one million readers. In France, where public opinion had been largely apathetic to imperialism before the 1890s, nationalism allegedly made many Frenchmen imperialists. Colonial societies and commercial pressure groups naturally took advantage of this mood to push governments into yet more colonial acquisitions.

The influence of Social Darwinism (see page 71) was also felt on attitudes to colonies and native societies. The maxim 'survival of the fittest', when applied to the human rather than animal kingdom, acted as a justification for colonialism. Superior races – the Europeans – were obviously destined to rule over inferior ones. Britain was 'the greatest of governing races the world has ever seen', in Chamberlain's view. The reverse of this expansionist, self-confident feeling was the fear of decadence and decline. Jules Ferry made the point explicitly when he warned that unless France acquired colonies 'we shall take the road leading to decadence – we shall meet the fate of Spain'. Clearly, nationalism was transforming itself into imperialism.

6 The Causes of the Scramble for Africa

KEY ISSUE Why did the partition of Africa occur?

The partition of Africa can be explained, in part, by some of the motives ascribed to imperialism in general. Nevertheless, some historians have searched for a more specific explanation of it. The 'classic' explanation is that offered by Robinson and Gallagher, who argued that British policy in Africa was essentially a defensive reaction to a series of local crises. The main consideration for the British government in these crises was the security of the route to India. Their interpretation of the situation in southern Africa, in which they stressed the crucial importance of the Cape to imperial interests, has been generally accepted. On the other hand, their view that Egypt acted as a catalyst to the partition of tropical Africa has been criticised. Their notion of a 'chain reaction', in which French resentment at the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 activated a latent rivalry in West Africa, is not sound. French expansion from Senegal, which began in 1879, clearly pre-dated the crisis over Egypt.

The view that it was rival claims to the Congo that sparked off partition is more convincing. Firstly, the interests of at least four European states were involved, not just two as in the case of Egypt. Secondly, Bismarck's role in provoking the Scramble is given due

prominence in this interpretation since Germany played an active part in the Congo dispute. Thirdly, the creation of a Franco-German front against Britain's attempt to exclude them from the Congo introduced Great Power diplomacy into the situation in Africa. An additional link between the Congo dispute and the partition of Africa is the Berlin Conference of 1884–85, at which the ground rules for partition were laid down as well as a settlement of the Congo issue itself. Taken together, these four factors indicate that rival claims to the Congo played a more important part in initiating the Scramble than the Anglo-French dispute over Egypt.

A third line of enquiry has sought for an explanation of the timing of the Scramble. The key factor in the 1880s was the decline of British 'paramountcy' in Africa. Until the late 1870s, Britain had succeeded in maintaining an informal influence over most of Africa south of the Sahara. In the 1880s this was challenged. Military defeats in Asia and Africa, coinciding with a decline in relative naval power, were interpreted as signs of British weakness. Bismarck concluded that there would not be much resistance to joint Franco-German pressure. He had reason to resent British pretensions to influence over most of Africa. British paramountcy collapsed like a house of cards when she agreed to an international conference. But its collapse left a void. In this unstable situation Africa was 'up for grabs'. Protectorates were being proclaimed over African territory and some mechanism was needed to settle rival claims. The solution was the Berlin Conference. This marked the formal beginning of the partition of Africa.

The Scramble for Africa cannot be explained satisfactorily without some reference to changes taking place in Africa. Imperialism in general is no longer viewed exclusively in terms of economic or political pressures emanating from Europe. The traditional 'Euro-centric' approach is being modified by increasing recognition of the importance of changes at the 'periphery'. Imperialism is therefore increasingly seen as, in part, a response to a series of local crises and changing situations within Africa itself. African historians have contributed greatly to the awareness of these situations.

European governments were at times responding to crises that arose in different parts of Africa. In Egypt, the growth of an Egyptian nationalist movement forced Britain and France to decide between losing influence or intervention. Britain chose the latter, ostensibly to defend the Suez canal. In southern Africa a succession of crises seemed to put at risk strategic interests at the Cape. Most of these crises stemmed from the expansionist drives of European settlers. The French government faced similar problems from expansionists (especially the military) in Algeria and Senegal. In West Africa, problems arose when stable relationships between Europeans and Africans were upset by changes in the nature, or profitability, of existing patterns of trade.

Two general conclusions may be drawn. Firstly, although economic

imperialism is of relevance to European activity in Africa, it may be necessary to regard it as a quite separate factor from the European diplomacy of the Scramble. Secondly, the partition stemmed from an interaction between Europeans and Africans; it is not just a question of the impact of Europe on the Dark Continent.

7 Colonial Rivalries and International Relations

KEY ISSUE How were relations between the major Powers affected by colonial expansion?

Colonial rivalries inevitably had a great impact on relations between the Great Powers. Indeed, apart from the Bulgarian crisis of 1885–87, the focal points of international tension were to be found in Africa and the Far East, rather than in Europe, for much of the period from about 1884 to 1904.

a) Britain's Relations with France and Russia

During most of these years Britain's imperial rivalries with France and Russia were the key factor in international relations. Anglo-French relations underwent a dramatic change as a result of colonial rivalry. From 1870 until about 1884, Britain and France had no major quarrels and usually cooperated in international affairs. The next two decades, however, were marked by continual friction, especially in Africa, bringing them to the verge of war. 'Africa', complained Lord Salisbury, 'was created to be the plague of foreign offices'. Rivalry in West Africa certainly impaired Anglo-French relations. The economic interests of Britain and France there seemed themselves too small to justify war, but prestige was the crux of the matter. A local incident could flare up into a crisis if public opinion, inflamed by the press, insisted that 'national honour' was at stake. Both sides engaged in rather reckless 'brinkmanship', raising the spectre of war on the Niger, until the agreement of 1898. By this date the crisis centre had shifted to the Nile.

Britain's refusal to revive the Anglo-French partnership (the Dual Control) after her military intervention in Egypt in 1882 was a severe blow to French pride. French self-esteem would only be satisfied by a British withdrawal from Egypt. Britain, however, was resolved to stay. One reason for this was that Britain regarded signs of Franco-Russian co-operation in the Mediterranean in the 1890s as a serious threat to her strategic interests. France attempted to exert pressure through the Fashoda expedition. Yet in 1898, Britain would have gone to war with France rather than give way.

The Fashoda crisis ended an era of illusions. Good Anglo-French relations had to be based on France's acceptance of Britain's position

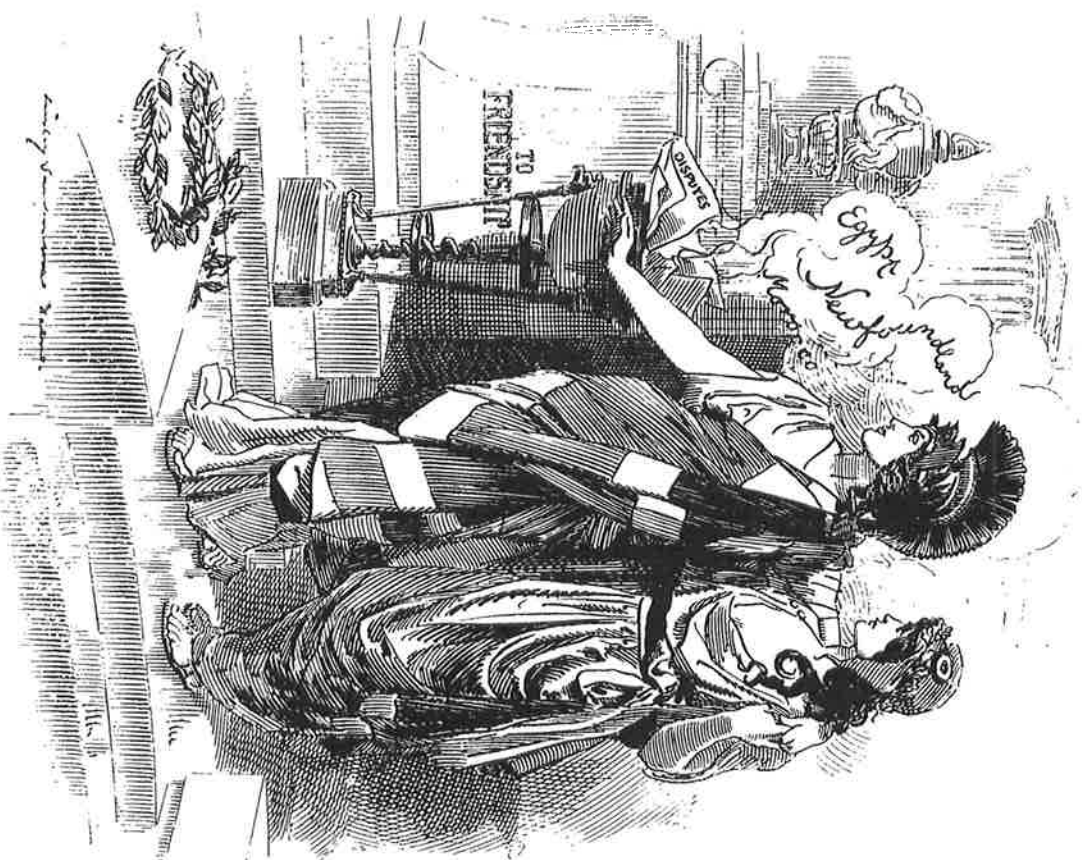
in Egypt. The important lesson which the French colonialists drew from Fashoda was that France should barter Egypt in exchange for French predominance in Morocco. They would also give up disputed fishery rights in Newfoundland for minor boundary changes in West Africa. This was the basis of the Anglo-French *entente*, or colonial agreement, of 1904 (see the cartoon on page 65). Paradoxically, therefore, acute rivalry in Africa and Asia transformed international relations in the opposite way to what might have been expected. Tensions prepared the way for *better* relations.

The same process is visible in Anglo-Russian relations. Hostility between Britain and Russia was nothing new, and Russian activities and intrigues in regions bordering India in the 1870s and 1880s continued to cause Britain considerable alarm. Now the era of imperial rivalry transferred the focus of the conflict to the Far East. The Franco-Russian Alliance of 1894 was more obviously anti-British in its operation than anti-German. Yet by 1907 Britain and Russia had concluded an *entente*.

b) Germany's Position

The effect of colonial rivalries on Germany's relations with other Powers was rather ambiguous. Germany seemed to use Africa partly as a means to an end – the furtherance of her diplomatic interests in Europe. In Africa Bismarck found opportunities to conciliate France and distract her from the grievance of Alsace-Lorraine. Hence his encouragement of France to take Tunisia in 1881. The thwarting of Italian ambitions there assured Franco-Italian hostility for a decade and induced Italy to join the Triple Alliance. Africa was also fertile ground for Franco-German co-operation against Britain. The British resented his making difficulties over Egypt as a sort of blackmail to secure concessions for Germany elsewhere. In the case of the Congo, Bismarck persuaded France to join Germany in 1884 in opposing Britain's rather dubious treaty with Portugal to exclude French and German interests. However, Germany was not in this period regarded as an undesirable colonial neighbour. The partitions of East Africa in 1886 and 1890 were negotiated in a fairly cordial spirit.

When Bismarck was German Chancellor, colonial conflicts were kept within certain limits. After 1890, however, German overseas policy became much less predictable and restrained, and this ultimately had a damaging effect on Anglo-German relations. German support for the Boers was a source of serious tension, as the affair of the Kruger telegram in 1896 showed (see page 77). The most serious clash in Africa was the clumsy attempt by Germany to provoke a crisis directed against French imperialism in Morocco in 1905 and in 1911 (see pages 83 and 89). This had the effect of strengthening, rather than weakening, Britain's *ententes* with France and Russia. By 1914 indeed the Anglo-French colonial understanding had become almost an alliance.



A MUTUAL SACRIFICE:

OR, L'ENTENTE, EN THREE ACTS.

A Punch cartoon.

c) The Far East: Britain's Alliance with Japan

Great Power rivalries in the Far East also had important effects on international relations. Russia was the only European Power to become involved in war, but her rivalry with Britain resulted in considerable tension. When British hopes of an alliance with Germany to resist Russian expansion in China were dashed, Britain turned to Japan.

In one sense the 1902 Anglo-Japanese alliance marked the end of Britain's 'Splendid Isolation'. She had now abandoned her traditional policy of avoiding 'entangling alliances' in peacetime. The serious implications of the treaty with Japan were voiced by Lord Salisbury: 'It involves a pledge on our part to defend Japanese action in Korea ... against France and Russia ... There is no limit; and no escape. We are pledged to war.' On the other hand, the alliance was restricted in scope: it was a regional pact, limited to the Far East. Some historians have therefore argued that the alliance did not impair Britain's freedom to maintain her isolation from her continental rivals. Yet this is not quite accurate. In 1903 Britain, as the ally of Japan, feared she might become involved in war against France, as the ally of Russia. The commitment to Japan acted consequently as a catalyst to the negotiations for an *entente* with France.

The Russo-Japanese war of 1904–5 did not involve Britain. But Russia's defeat by Japan had serious repercussions for international relations. Russia's prestige suffered a major blow and her military and naval capacity were greatly reduced. The outbreak of revolution in Russia in 1905, in protest against the incompetence of the Tsarist regime, weakened her further. Russia was therefore unable to play her full part as a Great Power in European affairs for several years after 1905. As we shall see, Germany was to take advantage of this. Furthermore, checked in the Far East, Russian ambitions turned back once more to the Balkans.

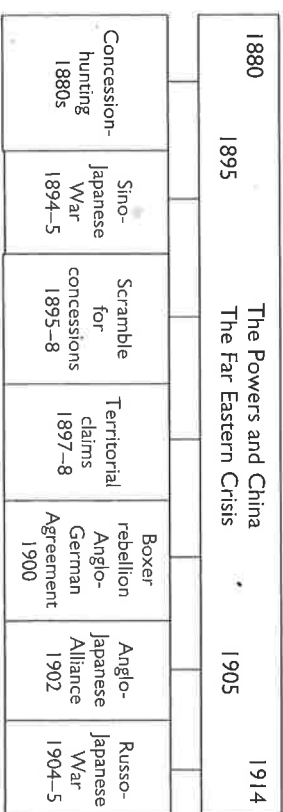
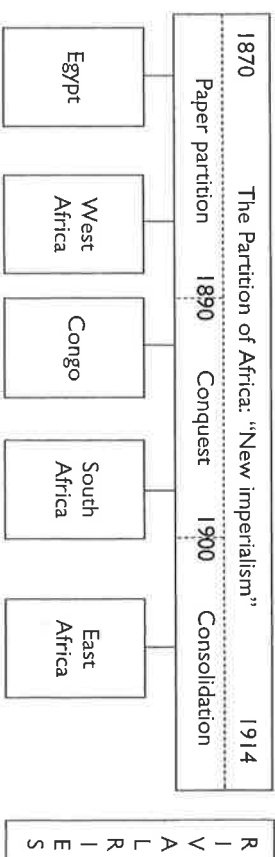
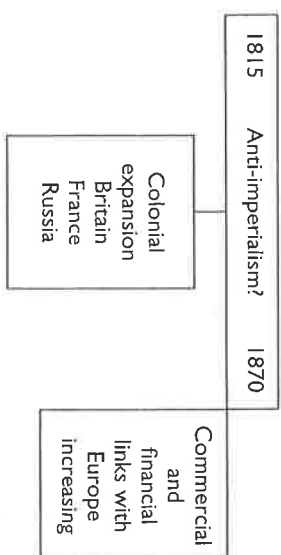
Imperial rivalries in Africa and Asia were not without their dangers but at least they were played out at a safe distance and did not usually involve questions of security and survival. In 1905, however, the centre of gravity of international affairs returned to Europe when Germany, quite gratuitously, raised the spectre of war against France. In the next chapter we turn to this *Melancholic* in action.

Working on Chapter 3

This is a long chapter. Do not be daunted by it. In particular, do not worry if, at least on a first reading, section 3 (on the Scramble for Africa) appears complicated. Be sure to grasp the overall contours of what happened (with the aid of the maps on Africa and China). Also, use the complexity (the events, the 'players', their motives) to test out

Summary Diagram

Colonial Rivalries, 1870–1914



Explanations of Imperialism

Economic

Capitalism
Investment
Raw materials

Trade

Depression
Markets
Tariffs

Political

Rivalry
Prestige
Strategy
Jingoism

The Scramble for Africa

Egyptian catalyst?
Claims to Congo
Germany and
new imperialism
British
paramourncy
Local crises