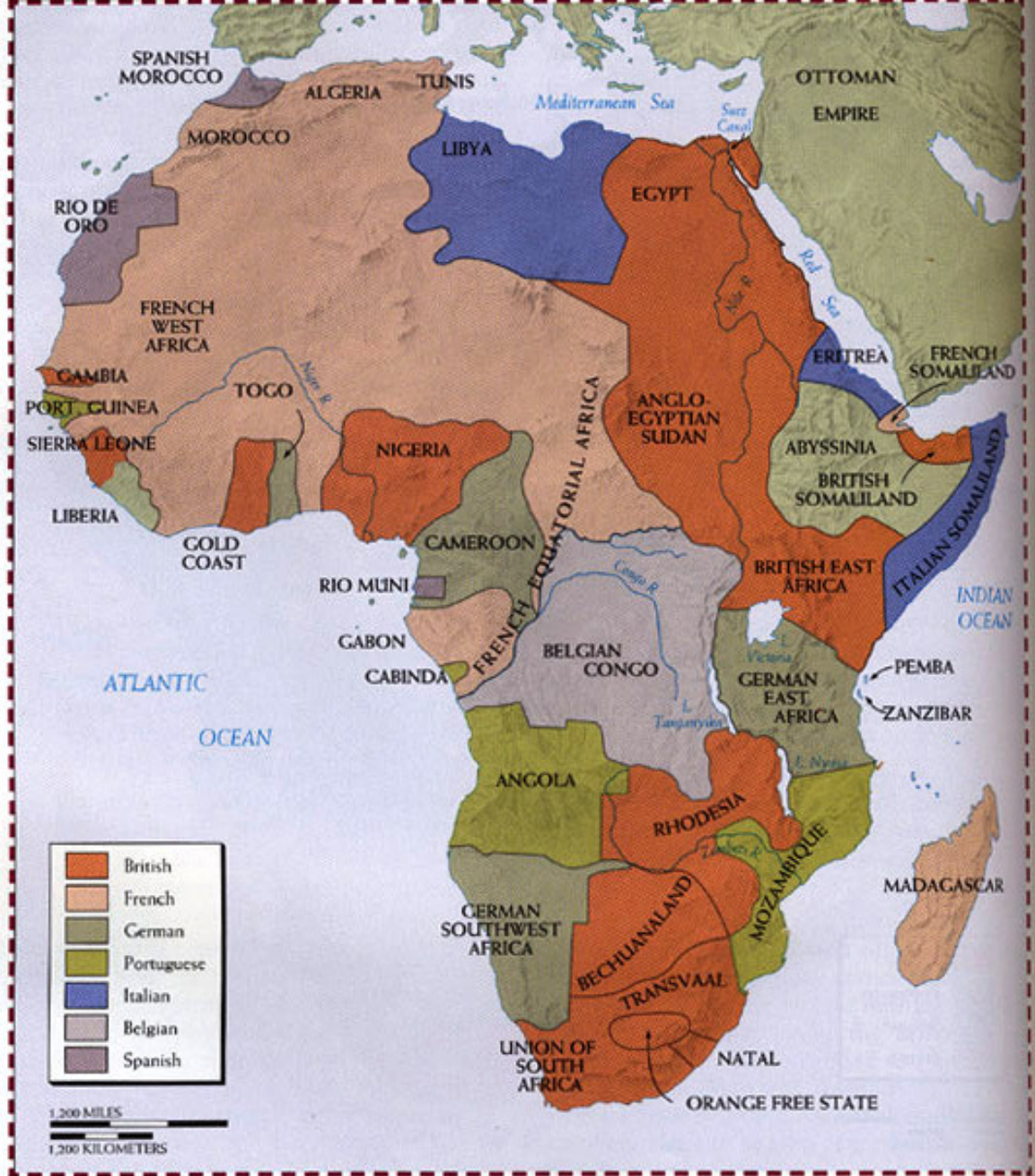


European Imperialism Scramble for Africa

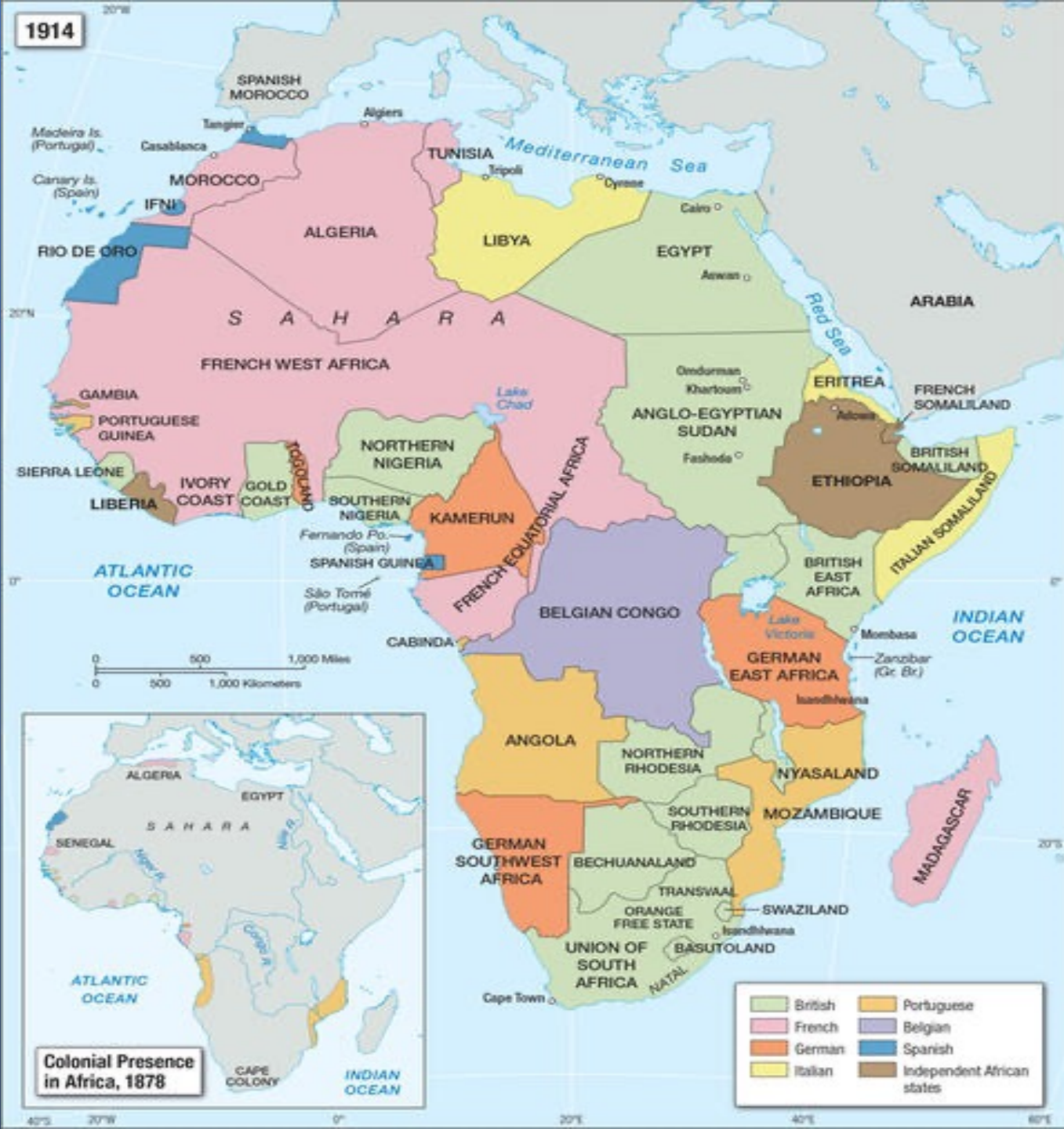
Muhammad Najm Akbar

Gentrain 413



MAP 26-2 PARTITION OF AFRICA, 1880-1914 Before 1880, the European presence in Africa was largely the remains of early exploration by old imperialists and did not penetrate the heart of the continent. By 1914, the occupying powers included most large European states; only Liberia and Abyssinia remained independent.

1914



Africa

- European powers retained control of Africa until decolonization was completed in the second half of the twentieth century.
- Just to help imagine the range of the conquest: Africa is the second largest continent with 11.73 square miles, more than three times the size of the continental United States. To put it differently, Africa is bigger than Europe, China, India, Argentina, New Zealand, and the continental United States combined.
- The European powers subdued local populations, particularly the opposition, reshaped the existing societies to fit their purposes and introduced Western culture and institutions.

Colonization

- By the end of the nineteenth century, colonization was a globalized phenomenon.
- Developed means of mobility, shipping, weapons, and finances gave Europeans advantages over other civilizations.

Post-1815 Europe

- We learned in the last unit from Historian Paul Kennedy about several characteristics of post-1815 Europe.
- This historical period witnessed a steady, and after the 1840s spectacular, growth of an integrated global economy, which drew ever more regions into a transoceanic and transcontinental trading and financial network centered upon Western Europe and especially Great Britain.

Post-1815 Europe

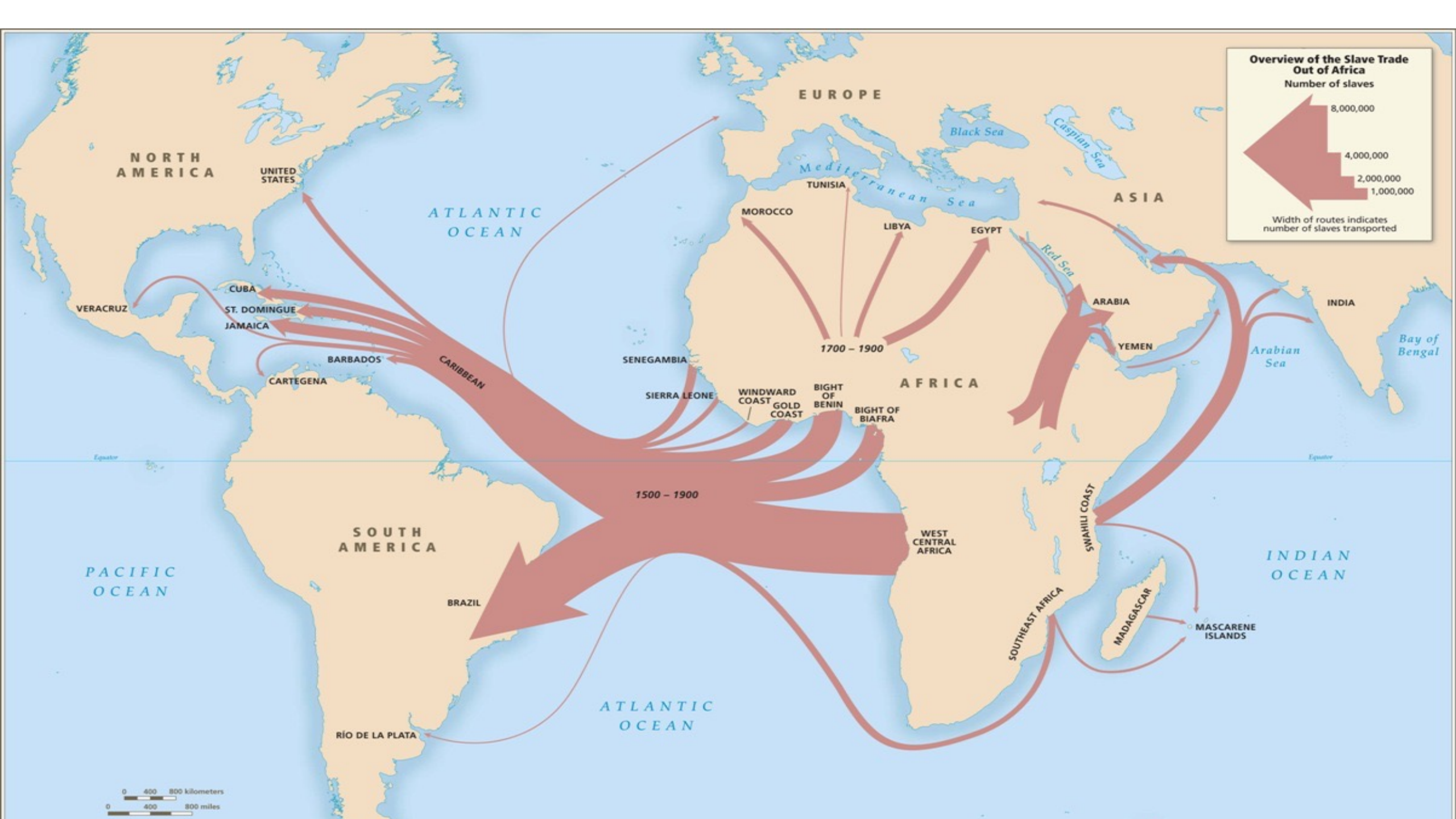
- In the second half of the century the railways, telegraphs, quick fighting guns, steamed propulsion, and armored warships became decisive indicators of military strength which European powers took to their colonies as well.

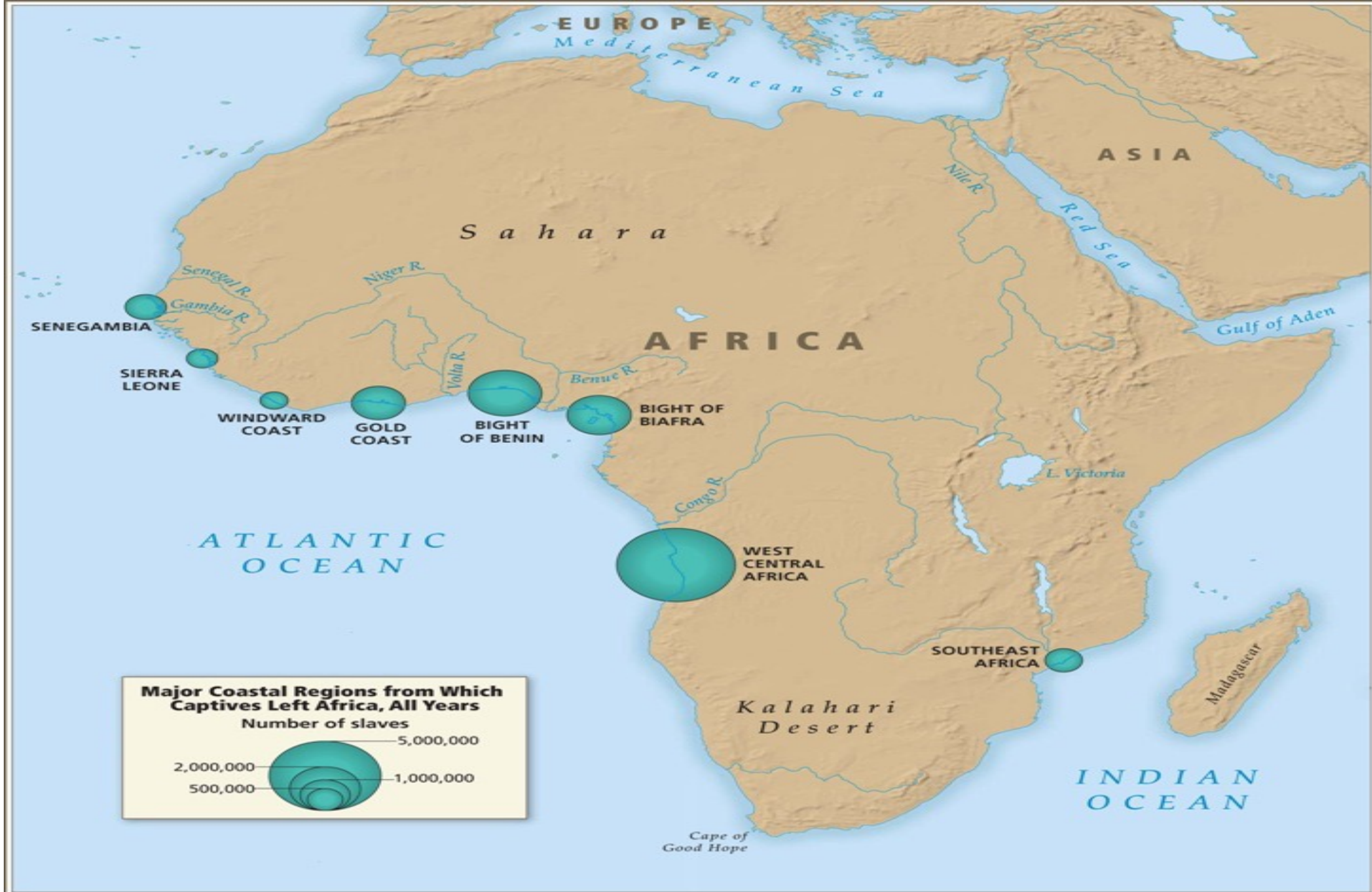
Non-Europeans Eclipsed

- The post-1815 era also marked the eclipse of the non-European world. The share of non-Europeans including China and British India in the world economy shrank.
- Despite the dismemberment of the Latin American empires of Spain and Portugal early nineteenth century, the European colonial outreach expanded stupendously. In the year 1800, they occupied or controlled 35% of the land surface of the world; by 1878, 67%, and by 1914 over 84%.

Africa Colonized

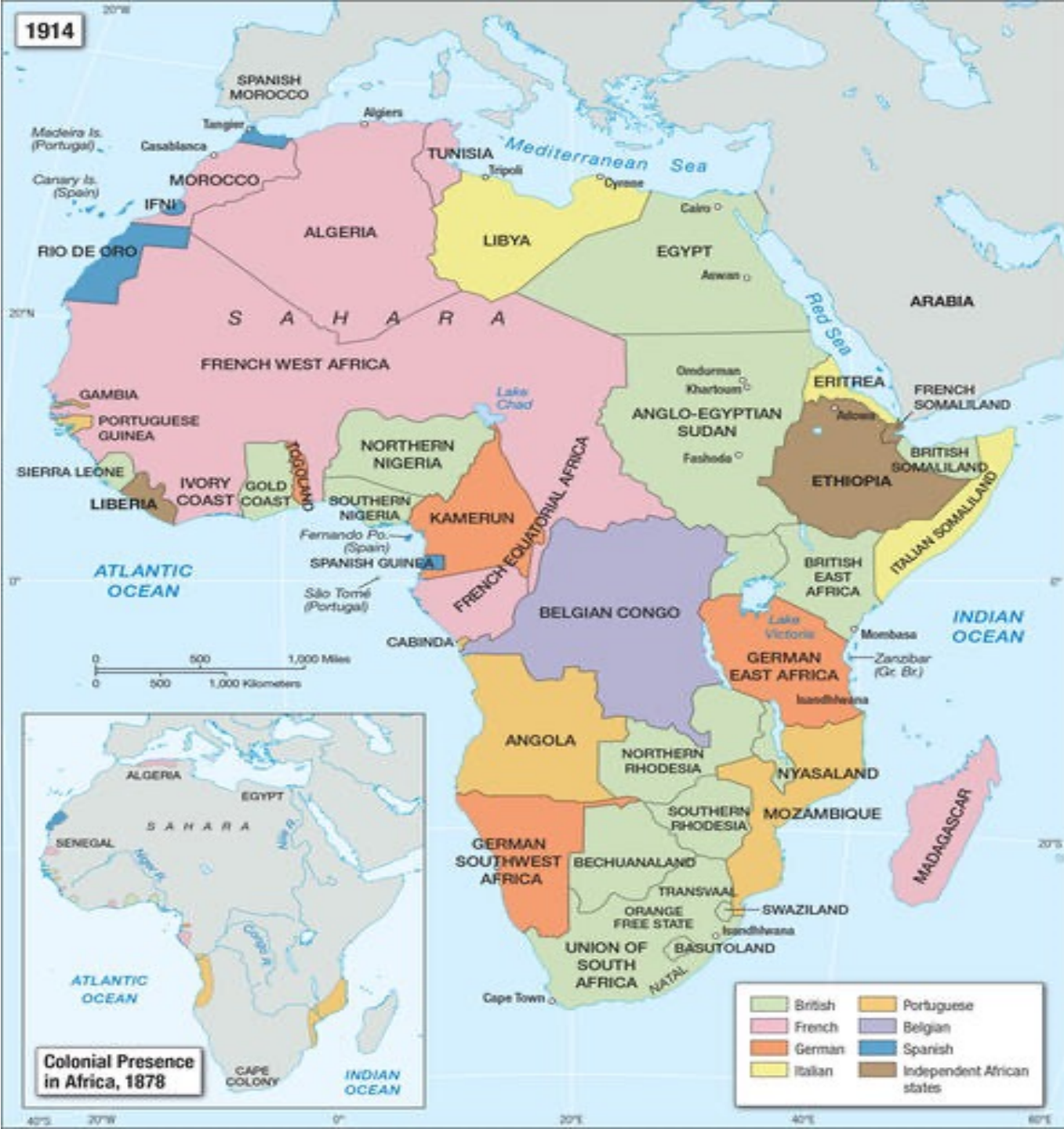
- Africa had a European presence since the Maritime Revolution of the fifteenth century.
- Portuguese were the first to explore the African Atlantic coast. The Treaty of Tordesillas of 1492 granted it to them, to the exclusion of their rival sister state of Spain.
- The sugar and slave trade spurred rivalries among European states and other players entered the race, initially to participate in the slave and gold trade and to follow the Portuguese into the Indian Ocean through the Cape of Good Hope.





Major Coastal Regions from Which Captives Left Africa, All Years
 Number of slaves





Push Factors

- Several factors drove the colonization of Africa and elsewhere.
- One colony is not enough: Guaranteed access to existing possessions also required control of the passageways to safeguard colonial interests against other rivals.
- Growing financial markets looked for new investment opportunities.
- A generation of adventurous merchant financiers and settlers was willing to take risks for profiteering. Joint Stock Companies lead the effort.

Push Factors

- Africa experienced a burst of colonial expansion between about 1880 and 1914, following the Congress of Berlin which discussed and regulated the last bit of scramble for Africa.
- The Industrial Revolution-led manufacturing capacity needed markets and raw materials. African colonies were essentially monoeconomies, good for the increased production, for export, of a single commodity. Thus, Senegal had peanuts, the Ivory Coast and the Gold Coast (Ghana) cocoa; Kenya had tea and coffee; Uganda produced cotton; the Belgian Congo was rich with rubber and copper, and Northern Rhodesia had copper.

Push Factors

- Colonization was not impossible. The subject persons were amenable to discipline.
- Africans, despite low literacy, were viewed as quick at learning.
- Colonial administrators trained cooperative tribes as their clerks, soldiers, and favored workers. These preferences often sparked bitter tribal jealousies and rivalries throughout Africa.
- Europeans prided themselves on bringing Christianity and civilization to the dark continent.

Push Factors

- Dismissed the Africans as inferior people, they found them useful only for manual labor, treating them little better than slaves.
- They could establish new political boundaries that ignored the long-standing social cultural and political realities of local peoples, and their kinship and community ties.
- African resistance might be decimated in armed battles or dispossessed and forced onto reservations.
- Ruling through local elites. In these large well-organized societies where the potential for effective resistance remained great, westerners' tampering with the established power structure was risky.

Push Factors

- Colonial competition and conquest as part of an unavoidable Darwinian struggle for survival of the fittest.
- Superior races have rights over the inferior races.
- During the late 19th century ideas about social Darwinism and eugenics, the study of hereditary improvement by selective breeding, spread in the West and were used to justify competition, war, and imperialism.

Push Factors

- The breech-loading rifles and machine guns. Immense advantage.
- Medicine: disease more than distance or resistance had also kept Europeans out of most of Africa.
- By 1830, the French had discovered the power of quinine to protect their soldiers from deadly malaria long enough to take Algeria in North Africa.

Push Factors

- After 1850, explorers, missionaries, traders, soldiers, and officials came into sub-Saharan Africa armed with the new medicine.
- The patterns of conquest: sometimes missionaries and explorers entered new lands first.
- At other times traders or even military officers made decisions on their own to move in.

Push Factors

- Gaining colonies became a measure of status, proof of a nation's political and economic prowess.
- The French found solace in colonies for the losses suffered in the Franco-Prussian war.
- Italian conquest overseas promised to enhance Italy's credentials to seek first-rate power status on the continent.
- The West also found justification for imperialism in their civilizing mission. Rudyard Kipling invited them to “Take up the White Man’s burden...”

Why a Berlin Conference

- European geopolitical map had changed in the second half of the nineteenth century. Germany and Italy's unification respectively was complete by 1871. They were new entrants to the colonial enterprise and sought to snap up colonies.
- This renewed burst of imperialism came at precisely the time when nationalism was on the rise in Europe and found expression in imperial conquests of alien lands. The scramble for Africa was for “civilized nations,” to take over the remaining fields for industrial enterprise.
- Justification: we replace the authority of the slavers and Arabs or the intolerable tyranny.

The Berlin Conference

- Beginning in November 1884, the West African Conference of Berlin deliberated for 104 days, ending on February 26, 1885.
- At the time of the conference, 80 percent of Africa remained under traditional and local control. The Europeans only influenced the coast. Trade and contact with Europeans affected Africa but except for coastal and certain other limited areas such as South Africa, most of Africa remained free from European control.

General Act of the Berlin Conference on West Africa, 26 February 1885

- Signatories and participants included the representatives of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, the United States of America, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Sweden-Norway, and Turkey (Ottoman Empire). No representation of Africans.
- United States did not ratify the General Act.



General Act of the Berlin Conference, Article 6

- I have [linked the General Act](#) here but would like you to read Article Six and Chapter VI , Article 34, with me:
- PROVISIONS RELATIVE TO PROTECTION OF THE NATIVES, OF MISSIONARIES AND TRAVELLERS, AS WELL AS RELATIVE TO RELIGIOUS LIBERTY
- Article 6: All the Powers exercising sovereign rights or influence in the aforesaid territories bind themselves to watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral and material well-being, and to help in suppressing slavery, and especially the slave trade.

General Act of the Berlin Conference

Article 6

- They shall, without distinction of creed or nation, protect and favour all religious, scientific or charitable institutions and undertakings created and organized for the above ends, or which aim at instructing the natives and bringing home to them the blessings of civilization. Christian missionaries, scientists and explorers, with their followers, property and collections, shall likewise be the objects of especial protection. Freedom of conscience and religious toleration are expressly guaranteed to the natives, no less than to subjects and to foreigners. The free and public exercise of all forms of divine worship, and the right to build edifices for religious purposes, and to organize religious missions belonging to all creeds, shall not be limited or fettered in any way whatsoever.

Wiped Out

- Seats of vital civilizations in the north.
- Long-established Islamic societies in sub-Saharan Africa particularly in the western and central Sudan.

CHAPTER VI: DECLARATION RELATIVE TO THE ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS TO BE OBSERVED IN ORDER THAT NEW OCCUPATIONS ON THE COASTS OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT MAY BE HELD TO BE EFFECTIVE

- Article 34

Any Power which henceforth takes possession of a tract of land on the coasts of the African continent outside of its present possessions, or which, being hitherto without such possessions, shall acquire them, as well as the Power which assumes a Protectorate there, shall accompany the respective act with a notification thereof, addressed to the other Signatory Powers of the present Act, in order to enable them, if need be, to make good any claims of their own.

The French

- North Africa: by the middle decades of the 19th century the French had conquered and annexed Algeria in North Africa.
- Pushed their way up the Senegal River in the West.
- The French reluctantly acquiesced to British control in Egypt in return for Britain's support of the French ambitions in northwestern Africa.

The French

- France expanded from its stake in Algeria to Tunisia, Morocco, and most of northwestern Africa.
- The French centered their efforts in western Africa.

The British

- The British had taken the Cape colony in South Africa from the Dutch during the Napoleonic wars.
- The Dutch settlers had moved northward into the interior.

The British

- In the late 1870s, two developments initiated an international scramble to carve up Africa.
- The first occurred in Egypt. Napoleon had alarmed the British (and the Ottomans) with his Egyptian campaign in 1798.
- Both Britain and France had an interest in this ancient North African state not only for commercial reasons but also as a bridge to Asia.
- European bankers financed the construction of port facilities, railroads, and telegraph lines in Egypt. They also granted high-interest loans to Egypt's government in 1869 when Ferdinand de Lesseps completed the Suez Canal, the vital link from the Mediterranean Sea through Egypt to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

The British

- The British desired control over the canal because it was the gateway to India as well.
- In 1875, Great Britain rescued the financially distressed Egyptian government and purchased the Egyptian ruler, the Khedives' controlling portion of the canal stock.
- Four years later, France and Britain seized Egypt's treasury to secure their investments.

The British

- When nationalist groups in Egypt revolted, British troops occupied Egypt formally.
- The Khedive remained in office but after 1882 Britain held most of the real power. By then, 3000 ships a year passed through the Suez Canal.
- The British reshaped Egypt's economy so that it produced cotton, silk, and wheat for export in return for manufactured goods.

The British

- They also disrupted local work life by hiring Egyptian laborers for their projects whether as railroad builders or servants.
- Worse, they insulted and favored groups such as Muslims and Arabs by paying them less than favored groups.
- The British attached as much significance to the Suez as Cape of Good Hope.

The British

- The imperial powers averted most conflicts by diplomacy in South Africa. However, even the most skilled diplomacy failed to keep the peace.
- Early in the 19th century, British settlers began to move into the South African Cape colony. The Dutch Boers, Afrikaners, had settled there in the 17th century. They resented Britain's abolition of slavery. They trekked northward far into the interior, defeating the resisting Zulus in their way.
- Eventually, the British recognized the independence of the two Boer states, Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

The British

- In the 1880s, rich gold mines were discovered in Transvaal. These mines attracted British immigrants.
- The British entrepreneur and empire builder Cecil Rhodes (1853-1902) backed by powerful interest groups and concerned about the growing German presence in southwestern Africa, decided to brush aside the two little Boer republics.

The British

- Boers revisited. It took the British three years 1899- 1902 of military effort to score a victory at the cost of severe casualties and enormous expenses. Backed by 300,000 troops from India and the homeland, Britain finally won the brutal contest. They decided to treat the defeated Boers leniently.
- Boers, thus, became a part of the Union of South Africa. Their hero, General Louis Botha (1862- 1919), was elected the Union's first Prime Minister.
- Botha's government announced that it would permit no equality between colored people and white inhabitants. This was the beginning of apartheid, a policy that South Africa would hold on to for the next eighty years.

Congo Free State

- At the same time, King Leopold II of Belgium, (r. 1865-1909), devoured Congo-Kinshasa, his slice of “this magnificent African cake.” He exploited its ivory, rubber, hardwoods, palm oil, and glory.
- Congo was Leopold’s holding until 1908 when it became a Belgian colony. He claimed that his purpose was to open civilization to central Africa.
- Managed by his agent, Henry Stanley, his troops brutally killed and mutilated thousands of local people if they failed to comply with their ambitions. They forced people into the forest to collect rubber. If they did not go, they were shot down and their left hands were cut off and taken as trophies.

East Africa

- The Germans had colonies in eastern and Southwest Africa.
- By 1914 most of the huge continent had been carved up by the various European powers. The main exception was Ethiopia where emperor Menelik II (r. 1889- 1913) cleverly played one European power off another.
- In the process, he acquired modern arms to defeat the invading Italians in 1896.
- In 1914, the Europeans' costliest struggles occurred among themselves. The war and the League of Nations changed the colonial map of Africa.

Conclusion

- By the second half of the twentieth century, the decolonization of Africa will be complete. We will discuss this in a future lecture.
- Decolonization will unfurl in settler and non-settler colonies differently.
- European Imperialism realized by then that physical control over colonized subjects was not sustainable given the rising tide of nationalism and depleting justifications for colonizing in Africa.
- Successful colonizers then sought a continuation of economic and political relationships and preferred that path over direct control.

Email

Questions/Comments

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