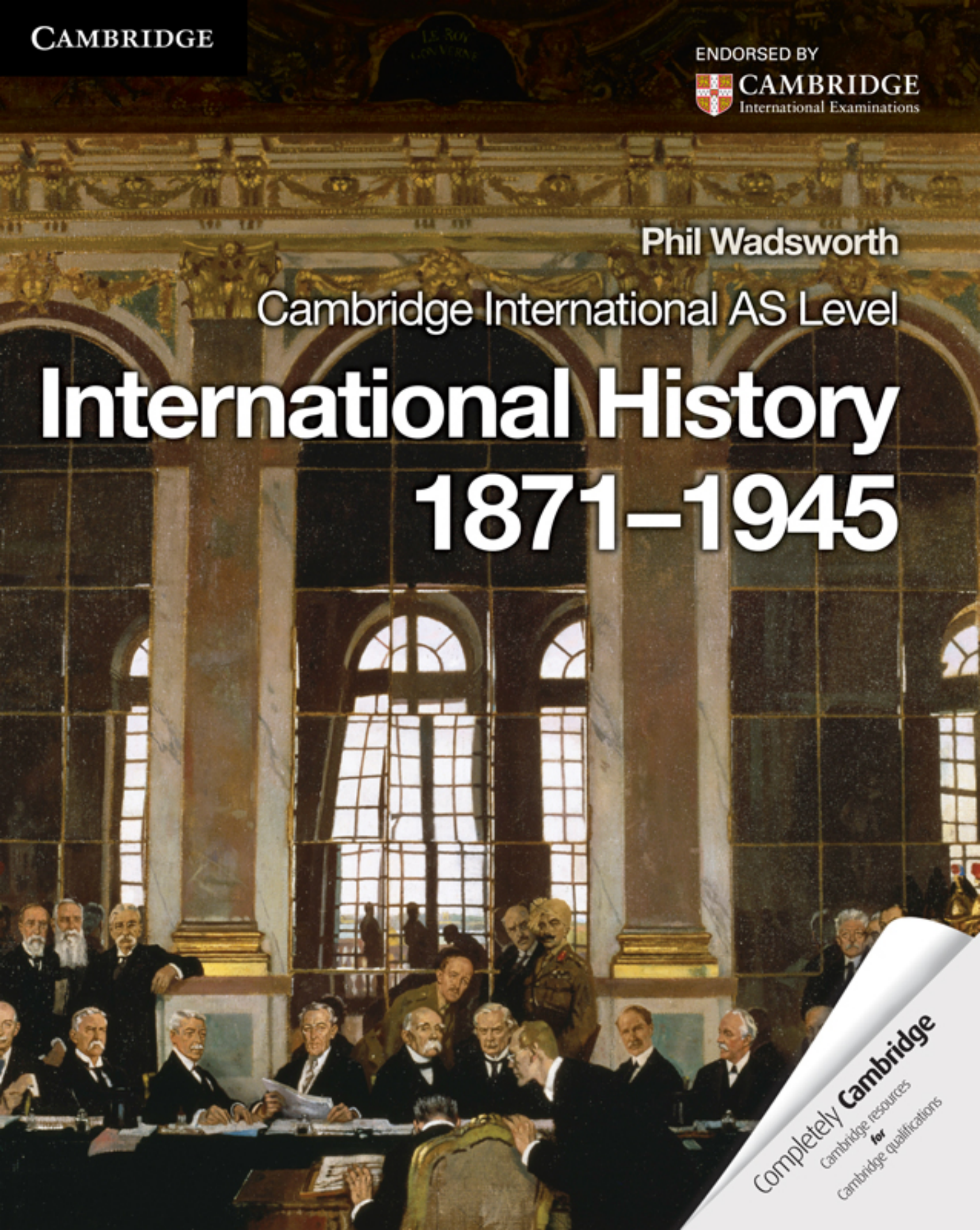
CAMBRIDGE

ENDORSED BY
CAMBRIDGE
International Examinations



Phil Wadsworth

Cambridge International AS Level

International History 1871–1945

Completely Cambridge
Cambridge resources
for
Cambridge qualifications

Phil Wadsworth
Series editor: Patrick Walsh-Atkins

Cambridge International AS Level

International History 1871–1945

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107613232

First published 2013

Printed in the United Kingdom by Latimer Trend

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-61323-2 Paperback

Contents

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.

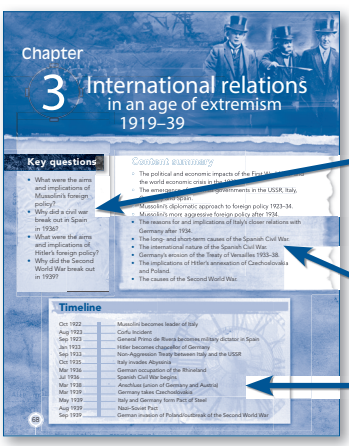
Paper 1 lasts for one hour and is based on *The Search for International Peace and Security 1919–45*. The paper will contain at least three different sources, and candidates will have to answer two questions on them. Students are not expected to have extensive historical knowledge to deal with these 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 of a range of skills such as focused writing, evaluation and analysis.

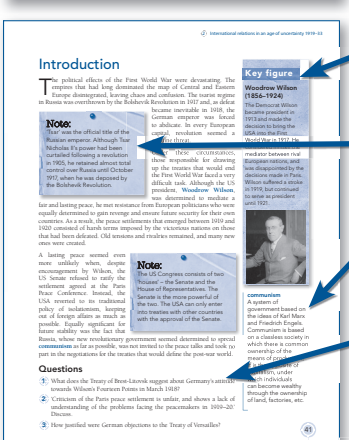
All chapters have a similar structure. They key features are as follows:



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.

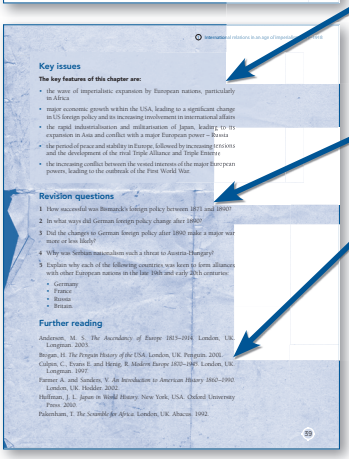


4 **Key figures** offer a detailed profile of key personalities.

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.

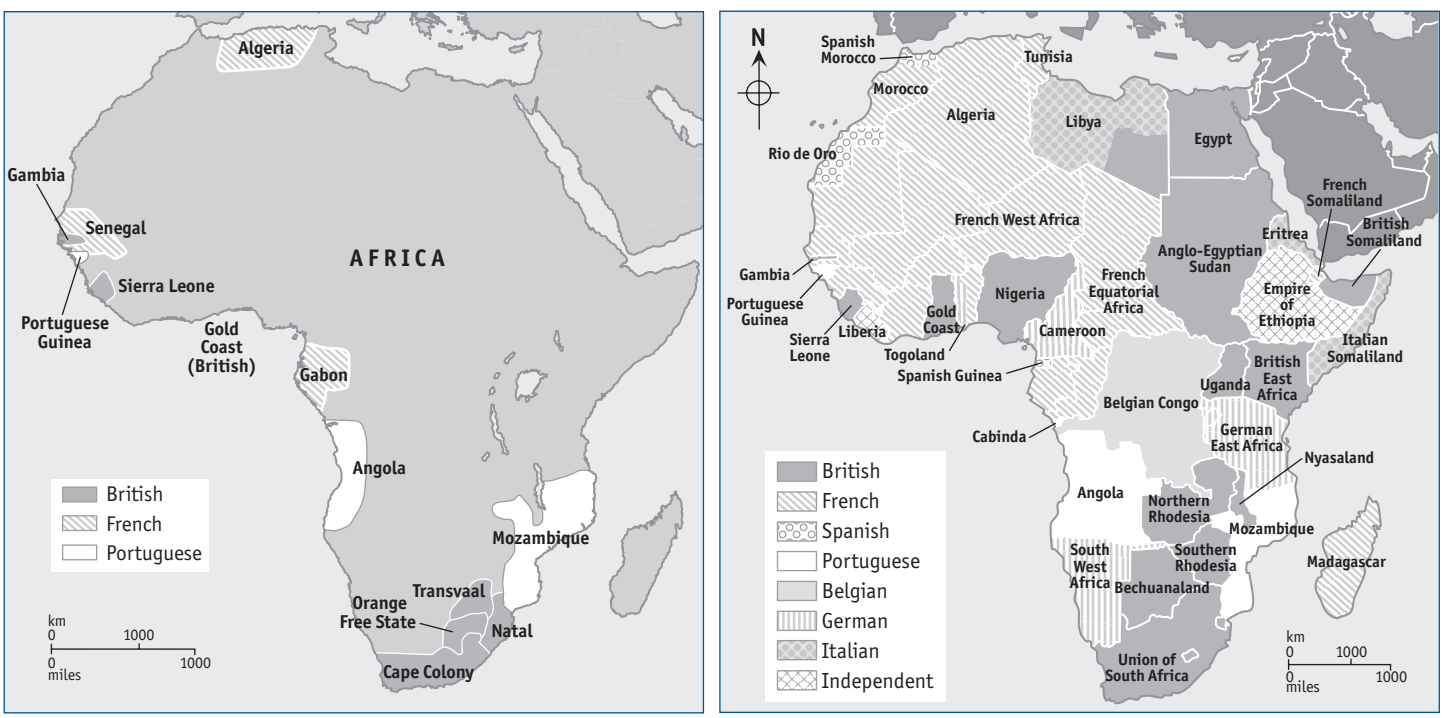
imperialism
The policy of extending a nation's power by gaining political and economic control over more territory. This is sometimes referred to as colonialism.

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.

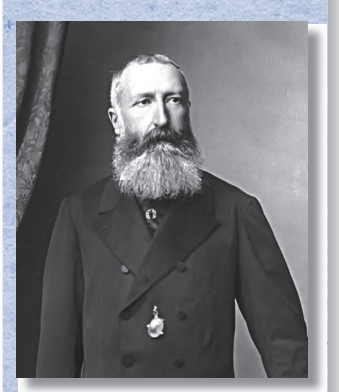
The abolition of the slave trade

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.

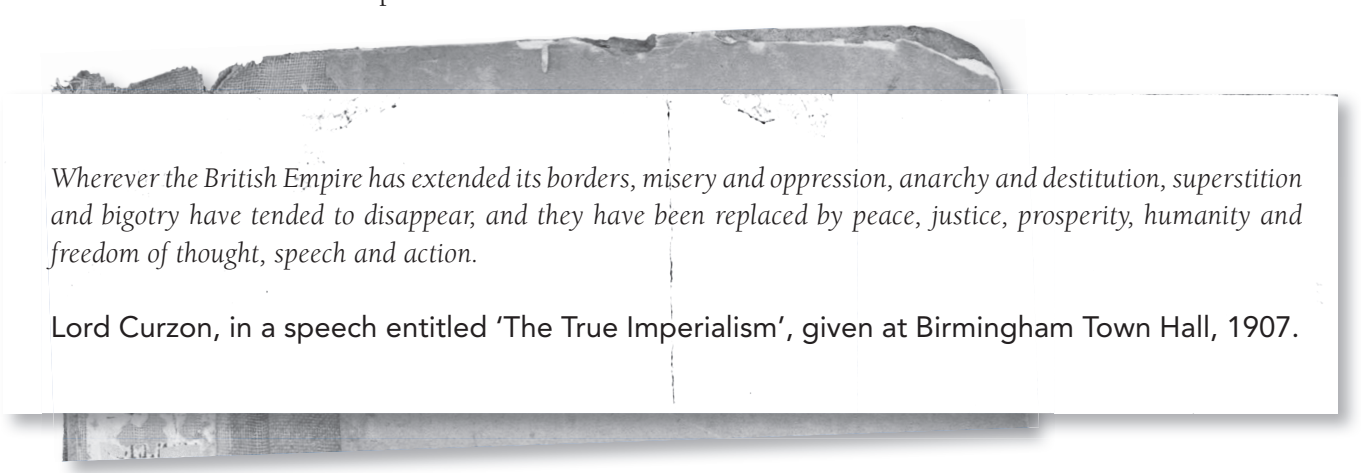


The Industrial Revolution

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.

It is well to realize that it is for our advantage—and not alone at the dictates of duty—that we have undertaken responsibilities in East Africa. It is in order to foster the growth of the trade of this country, and to find an outlet for our manufactures and our surplus energy that our far-seeing statesmen and our commercial men advocate colonial expansion …

There are some who say we have no right in Africa at all, that it 'belongs to the native.' I hold that our right is the necessity that is upon us to provide for our ever-growing population and to stimulate trade by finding new markets, since we know what misery trade depression brings at home. While thus serving our own interest as a nation, we may bring at the same time many advantages to Africa.

Lord Lugard, in his book *The Rise of Our East African Empire, Vol. I*, published in 1893.

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.

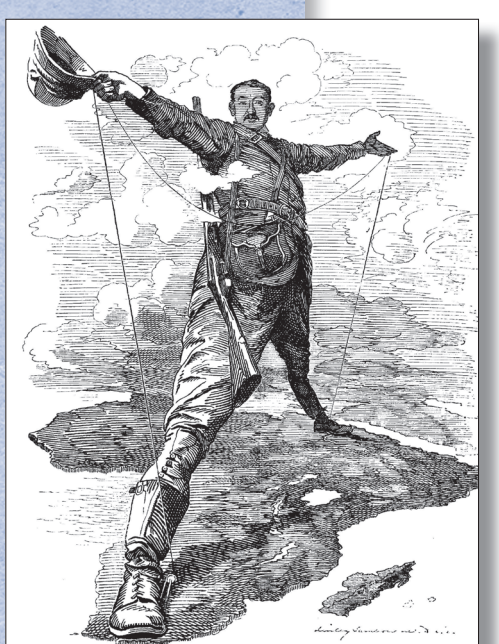


Figure 1.4 A cartoon of Cecil Rhodes, published in the British magazine Punch *in 1892; it links Rhodes' name with the ancient statue known as the Colossus of Rhodes*

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.

'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.

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.

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.

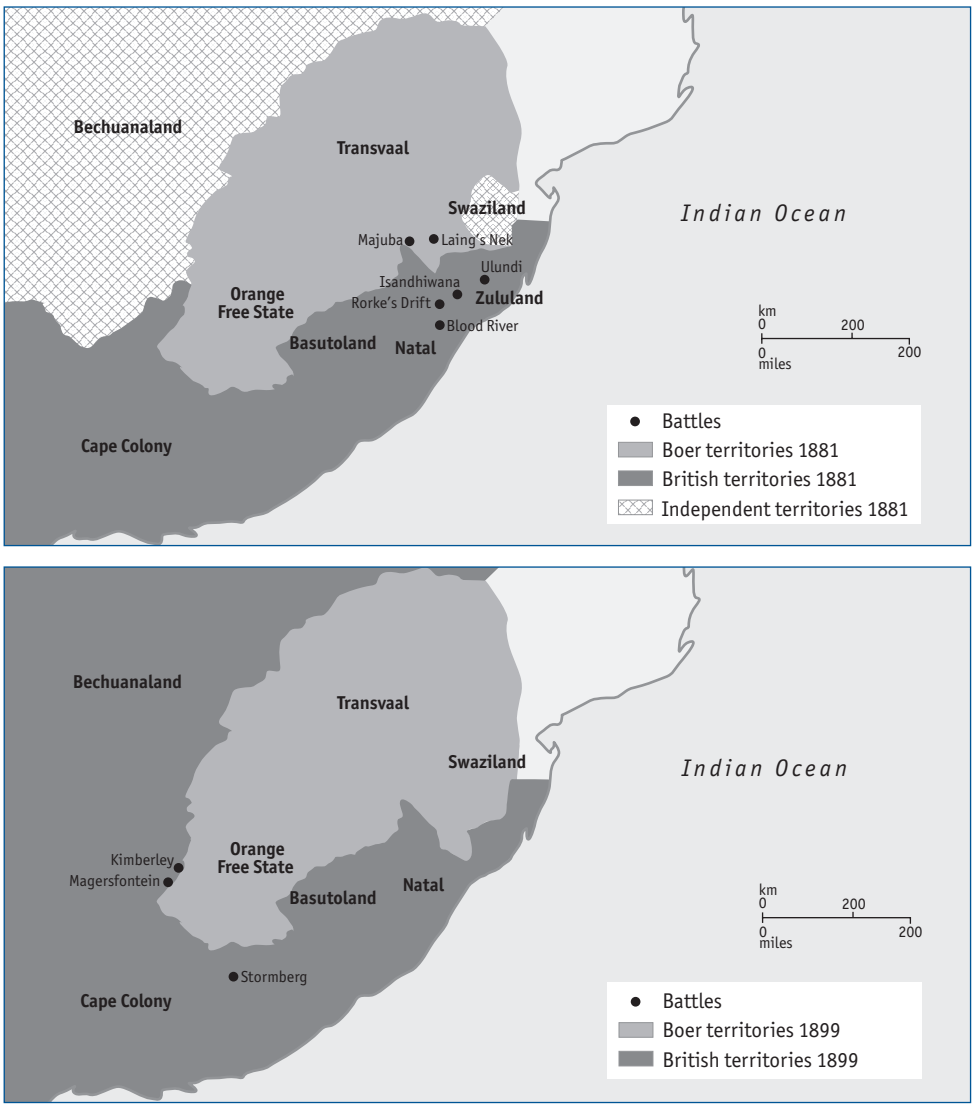


Figure 1.5 Two maps showing South Africa during the Boer Wars, in 1880–81 (top) and 1899–1902 (bottom)

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.

Figure 1.6 Boers in a concentration camp during the Second Boer War

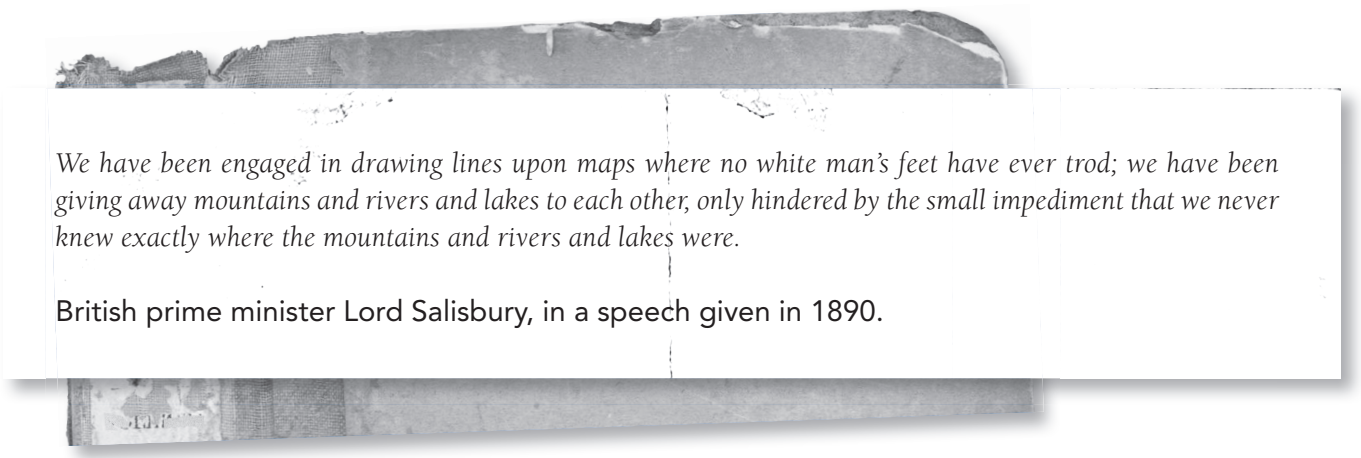
As a result of this, British politicians – and public opinion in general – grew divided over whether Britain should continue its imperialist policies. Many people believed that Wilhelm II's telegram to Kruger was a clear sign that Germany would support the Boers in the case of future conflict with Britain. Feeling both isolated and vulnerable, Britain began seeking allies elsewhere in the world, starting with Japan (see page 26).

The effects of the 'scramble for Africa'

The European colonisers claimed to have brought benefits to the African people, and there is some truth to these claims:

- They developed states with efficient systems of administration and government.
- They provided education for the native inhabitants.
- They created new systems of transport and communications – building roads and railways, and running telegraph wires across the continent.
- They engineered water and sanitation systems, and provided medical care and hospitals.
- They introduced more efficient methods of farming and new, more productive crops such as maize, pear, cassava, cotton, sisal and plantain.

However, this was not the whole story. As a result of European colonisation, Africa was randomly partitioned according to the needs and wishes of the colonisers, who took no account of existing boundaries. With little knowledge of the local geography, no understanding of the tribal or ethnic groupings of the local people, and a steadfast refusal to take into account the opinions of local chieftains, borders were drawn arbitrarily.



We have been engaged in drawing lines upon maps where no white man's feet have ever trod; we have been giving away mountains and rivers and lakes to each other, only hindered by the small impediment that we never knew exactly where the mountains and rivers and lakes were.

British prime minister Lord Salisbury, in a speech given in 1890.

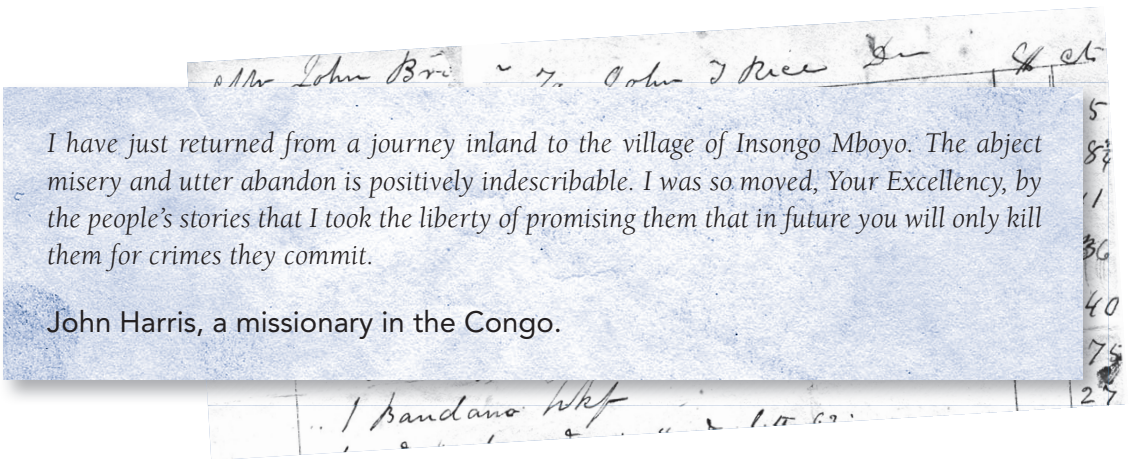
In many of its African possessions, such as northern Nigeria, Britain adopted a form of indirect control and governed through local chieftains. However, other European nations preferred more direct rule. In both cases, government was based on a clear administrative hierarchy, with Europeans at the top and Africans below. The explorer Henry Morton Stanley said of the Africans: 'In order to rule them and keep one's life amongst them, it is necessary to regard them as children.' Such statements reflect the European view that Africans were inferior to them. Traditional African cultures were undermined as the Europeans introduced Western-style education, clothes, buildings and religion. In much the same way, the introduction of money completely changed the nature of the African economy.

Note:

There are several examples of the division of ethnic groupings as a result of African colonisation. Three of the most significant were: the Maasai people, who were split between the new countries of Kenya (62%) and Tanzania (38%); the Anyi people, who were divided between Ghana (58%) and the Ivory Coast (42%); and the Chewa people, who found themselves in three separate countries after the new boundaries were drawn – Mozambique (50%), Malawi (34%) and Zimbabwe (16%).

No longer able to farm their former land, Africans had little choice but to take jobs as cheap labour on public works such as building roads and railways. In addition, after colonisation there was large-scale exploitation of African resources. Raw materials were mined to support European industrial expansion, preventing Africa from developing industries of its own. European businessmen enhanced their own wealth by investing in African copper, gold, diamonds, ivory and cash crops such as cotton and coffee.

At times, this exploitation reached alarming levels of inhumanity. For example, Leopold II of Belgium (see page 9) amassed a huge fortune from rubber plantations in the Congo basin. He used forced labour – effectively a form of slavery, which had been expressly outlawed by the Treaty of Berlin (see page 13). Workers who failed to meet their quotas were beaten, mutilated or killed. The missionary John Harris was so shocked by what he saw in the Congo that he wrote to Leopold's representative in the area.



I have just returned from a journey inland to the village of Insongo Mboyo. The abject misery and utter abandon is positively indescribable. I was so moved, Your Excellency, by the people's stories that I took the liberty of promising them that in future you will only kill them for crimes they commit.

John Harris, a missionary in the Congo.

African resistance to European rule sometimes led to harsh retribution. Many African chieftains were killed or sent into exile for defying attempts by Europeans to take over their land. Chief Mkwawa of the Hehe, for example, was beheaded for opposing German colonial rule in Tanganyika. Between 1904 and 1907, the Herero and Nama peoples rebelled against German rule in German South-West Africa. The Germans drove them out into the Kalahari Desert and left them there. Most of them died of hunger or thirst, and the allegation that German soldiers poisoned desert wells has led to charges of **genocide**.

genocide
The deliberate and systematic destruction of an ethnic, racial, religious or national group. In 1985, the United Nations labelled the German action against the Herero and Nama peoples as genocide.

The effects of the 'scramble' on international relations

As shown by the Treaty of Berlin, European nations had gone to some lengths to ensure that the rush for land in Africa did not lead to war between them. Nevertheless, this could not disguise the fact that they remained rivals, competing for raw materials, markets, trade and territory. Most notably, the Fashoda Incident (see page 13) led to widespread outrage in both France and Britain, with each country accusing the other of unjustified aggression. Both nations began the process of mobilising their fleets in preparation for war before a compromise was finally reached. Tensions between European nations intensified when Germany entered the race for African possessions. Britain, in particular, saw German acquisitions in Africa as a threat to its own strategic and commercial interests.

The late 19th century was a period of intense **nationalism**. European governments were determined to protect their own rights and interests. Moreover, public opinion demanded that they did so. National pride was at stake and, increasingly, countries were prepared to adopt aggressive foreign policies to preserve this pride. In this sense the 'scramble for Africa' instigated an arms race, as countries began to enhance their military capabilities in order to defend their empires.

nationalism
The belief that one's own country is superior to other countries, and that its needs and interests should take priority over those of other nations.

Questions

1. Why did European nations take part in a 'scramble for Africa' in the period from 1871 to 1900?
2. 'The Industrial Revolution in Europe was the main reason for the "scramble for Africa" between 1871 and 1900.' How far do you agree?
3. What were the aims of the Treaty of Berlin (1885)?
4. What were the implications of the Boer Wars for British foreign policy?
5. Source A below is the telegram that German Kaiser Wilhelm II sent to the Boer leader Paul Kruger in 1896. Why did this telegram cause such anger in Britain?
6. To what extent did the African people benefit from the 'scramble for Africa'?
7. Look at Source B opposite, which shows a cartoon published in 1906. What point was the artist trying to make?

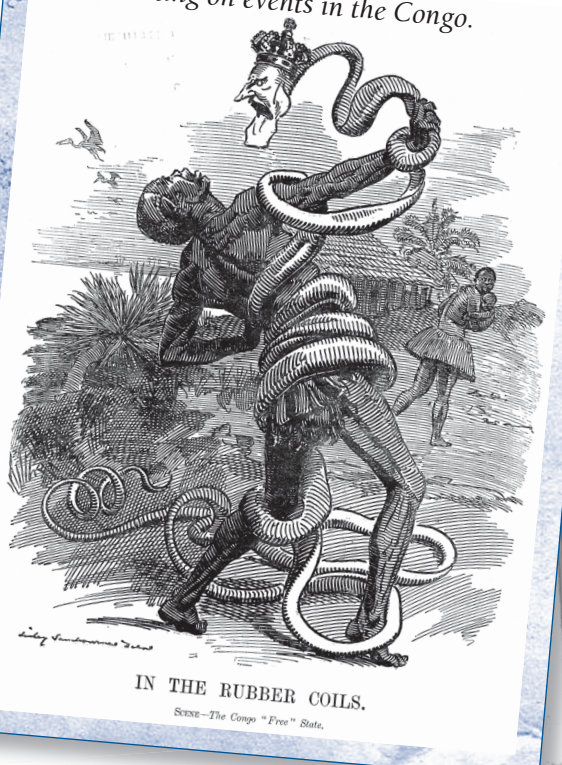
Source A

I express to you my sincere congratulations that you and your people, without appealing to the help of friendly powers, have succeeded, by your own energetic action against the armed bands which invaded your country as disturbers of the peace, in restoring peace and in maintaining the independence of the country against attack from without.

Telegram from Kaiser Wilhelm II to Paul Kruger, 3 January 1896.

Source B

A British cartoon published in 1906, commenting on events in the Congo.



The emergence of the USA as a world power

The USA before 1871

In 1871, events in Africa, Asia and the associated rivalries between the European powers were of little concern to the USA. Preoccupied with domestic issues – such as increasing US territory through westward expansion on the North American continent, as well as the American Civil War (1861–65) – people in the USA had little interest in wider international affairs. Throughout the 19th century, the USA followed a policy of **isolationism** and looked inwards, seeking to develop in its own way without outside interference or involvement in foreign issues.

isolationism
The policy of isolating one's country from the affairs of other nations by avoiding alliances and international commitments.

However, the USA could not completely ignore events in the wider world. There was a risk that ambitious European nations would renew their interest in gaining colonies in the New World: North and South America. By the early 19th century, virtually all the Latin American colonies of the once-great Spanish and Portuguese empires had gained independence. Only Cuba and Puerto Rico remained under Spanish rule. Concerns that Spain would try to win back control of its former possessions in South America – and that this would encourage other European powers to extend their empires into the Americas – led the USA to approve the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. This stated that the USA would not interfere in European affairs, and that any attempt by European powers to intervene in the Americas would be viewed by the USA as an act of aggression, and would be dealt with accordingly.

Note:
Lacking a credible navy and army, in reality the USA was in no position to enforce the Monroe Doctrine. However, Britain was willing to use its navy to ensure that no European country sought new possessions in the Americas. This offer was made largely to protect British trading interests, which would have been threatened if South American states had become colonies of Britain's European rivals.

Economic growth and the need for trade

Throughout the last 30 years of the 19th century, the USA emerged as an increasingly influential world power. During this time, the country experienced enormous industrial growth, made possible by rich supplies of raw materials (coal, iron ore and oil) and the expansion of railways. A rapidly increasing population, enhanced by large-scale immigration, provided both a workforce and a market. Import duties protected US products from foreign competition, and by the end of the century the USA was outstripping its main European rivals in the production of coal, pig iron, steel and cotton (see Table 1.1).

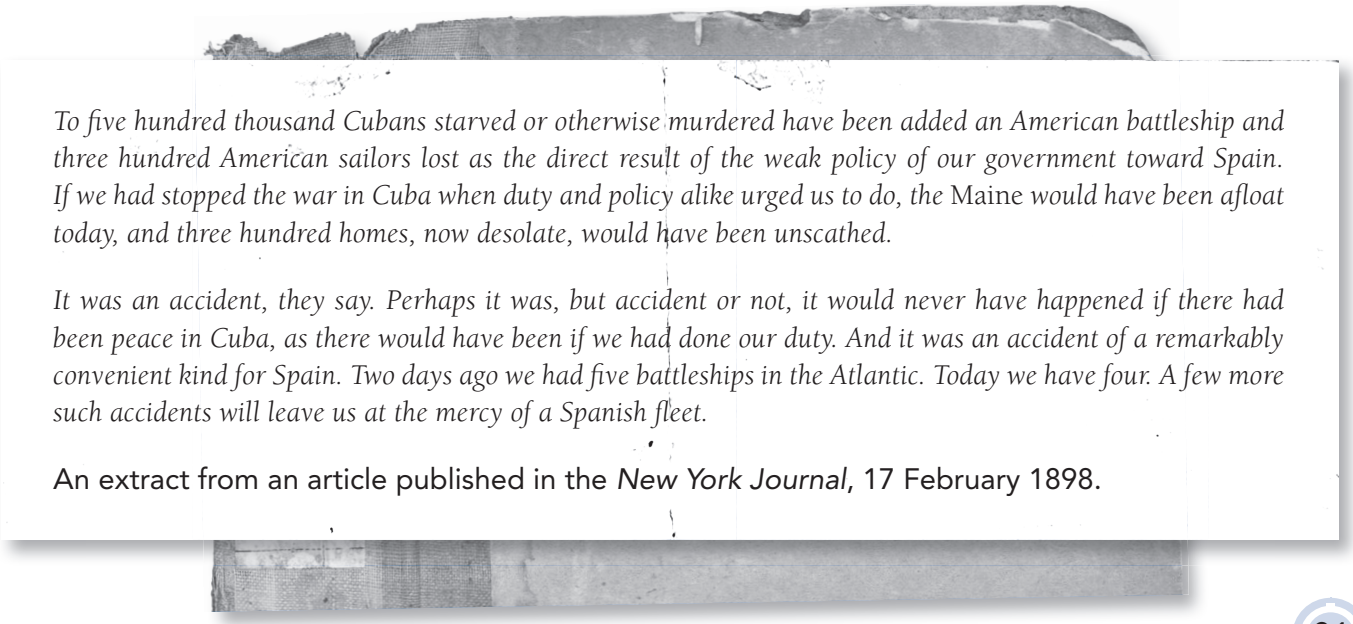
	USA	Closest rival
Coal output (tonnes)	238 million	199 million (Britain)
Value of exports (£)	311 million	390 million (Britain)
Pig iron (tonnes)	14.5 million	7.3 million (Britain)
Steel (tonnes)	12 million	5.4 million (Germany)
Railways (km)	294,500	45,000 (Germany)
Cotton production (bales)	10.6 million	3 million (India)
Wheat (bushels)	638 million	552 million (Russia)

***Table 1.1** Industrial output of the USA and its main European rivals, 1900. (Adapted from Nichol, J. and Lang, S.* Work Out Modern World History. *Basingstoke, UK. Macmillan. 1990.)*

A sudden economic downturn in 1893 alerted industrialists to the dangers of over-reliance on the domestic market, and they argued that the remedy was to sell more goods abroad. Since European nations practised **protectionism** throughout their empires, access to the Chinese market was increasingly viewed as vital for the USA's future prosperity. This would require investment in a strong navy to protect merchant ships. It would also require the acquisition of overseas bases to protect US interests. While many politicians in the USA supported this expansionist view, some argued that maintaining the traditional policy of isolationism, and avoiding foreign entanglements and responsibilities, was the best way to protect US interests.

protectionism
The policy of placing high tariffs (taxes) on imports in order to protect domestic industries from foreign competition. Protectionism is the opposite of free trade.

In many ways, the debate was settled by events in Cuba, where Spain was struggling to maintain control of its long-standing possession in a war against Cuban independence fighters. The USA remained neutral in the conflict until an explosion aboard the US battleship *Maine* in Havana harbour. Although the US government seemed to think that this was an accident, the American press believed that Spain was responsible, and it was heavily critical of the government's weak response to the incident.



To five hundred thousand Cubans starved or otherwise murdered have been added an American battleship and three hundred American sailors lost as the direct result of the weak policy of our government toward Spain. If we had stopped the war in Cuba when duty and policy alike urged us to do, the Maine *would have been afloat today, and three hundred homes, now desolate, would have been unscathed.*

It was an accident, they say. Perhaps it was, but accident or not, it would never have happened if there had been peace in Cuba, as there would have been if we had done our duty. And it was an accident of a remarkably convenient kind for Spain. Two days ago we had five battleships in the Atlantic. Today we have four. A few more such accidents will leave us at the mercy of a Spanish fleet.

An extract from an article published in the *New York Journal*, 17 February 1898.

Such reports did much to turn public opinion in favour of battle with Spain, and in April 1898 the US government formally declared war. Victory in the Spanish–American War left the USA in effective control of a nominally independent Cuba. In addition, the USA gained other former Spanish possessions including the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam. Almost immediately the Filipinos rebelled, and in order to retain control the USA was forced to fight a far longer and more costly war (1899–1902) than the one against Spain. Anti-imperialists, such as the Democratic presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan, protested against the acquisition of foreign territories, arguing that it was a betrayal of the USA's isolationist traditions. However, Bryan's defeat to the sitting president, William McKinley, in the 1900 presidential elections suggests that the majority of the US public supported the imperialist lobby.

The development of the USA as a world power

Less than a year into his second term, McKinley was assassinated and his vice-president **Theodore Roosevelt** was sworn in. Roosevelt fully supported the new imperialistic direction of US foreign policy. Believing that it was 'incumbent on all civilized and orderly powers to insist on the proper policing of the world', he followed policies designed to extend his country's influence globally:

- He ensured that the USA gained control of the building and operation of the Panama Canal (which opened in 1914). This allowed ships to pass between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans without the long and hazardous voyage around Cape Horn at the tip of South America. In both strategic and commercial terms, this added to the USA's global influence.
- He guaranteed that Cuba would effectively remain under US control by drawing up the Platt Amendment to the Cuban Constitution (1903). Under its terms, the USA was able to dictate Cuba's foreign policy and all its commercial activities. The USA was also granted rights over key land on the island, including the naval base at Guantanamo Bay.
- The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, introduced in 1904, stated that the USA would intervene if any Caribbean state was threatened by internal or external factors.

Key figure

Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919)

Roosevelt became president of the USA when William McKinley was assassinated in 1901, and was elected by a landslide in the 1904 presidential election. He believed that the USA should play a major role in world affairs, and he supported the move towards US imperialism. Roosevelt organised the USA's ownership of the Panama Canal and negotiated the Treaty of Portsmouth at the end of the Russo–Japanese War in 1905, for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Note:

The Platt Amendment and the Roosevelt Corollary combined to strengthen the USA's influence in the Caribbean significantly. The Corollary gave the USA the right to intervene in the region whenever it considered its interests (particularly economic) to be at risk, and US influence in Cuba especially remained strong well into the 20th century. The Amendment remained in force until 1934.

All that this country desires is to see the neighboring countries stable, orderly, and prosperous. Any country whose people conduct themselves well can count upon our hearty friendship. If a nation shows that it knows how to act with reasonable efficiency and decency in social and political matters, if it keeps order and pays its obligations, it need fear no interference from the United States. Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.

President Theodore Roosevelt, in a speech to the US Congress, December 1904.

The USA in 1914

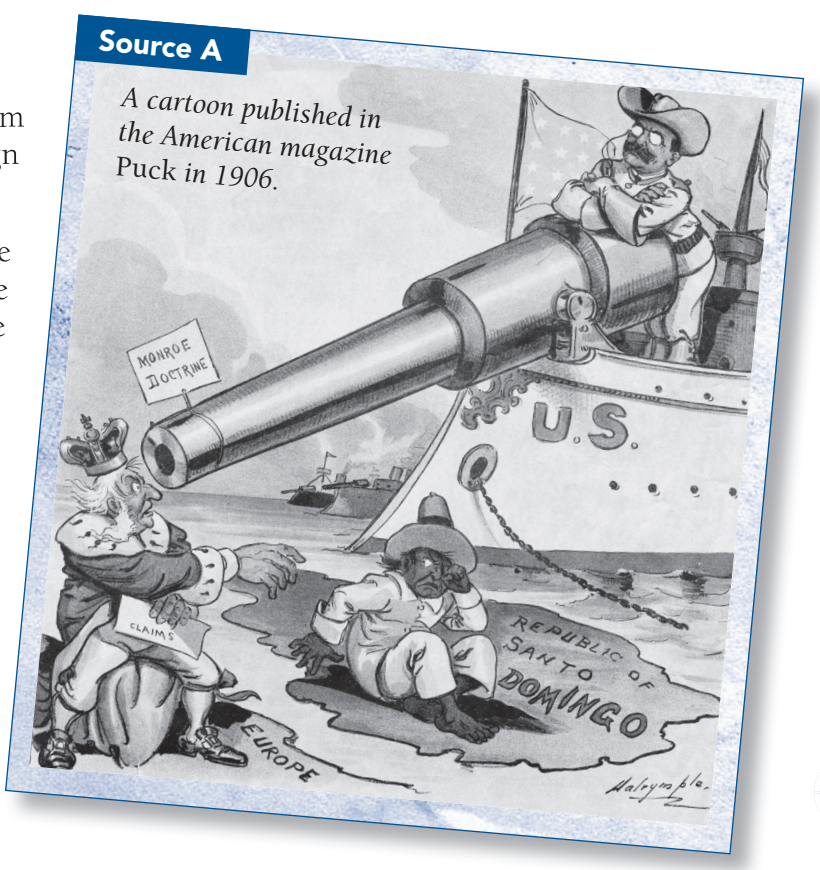
The USA's attempts to enhance its power-base in the Pacific region and, in particular, to gain trading rights in China, were less successful. Here it met stern opposition from well-established imperial nations such as Britain, Germany, France and Russia, as well as from the newly emerging power of Japan. Nevertheless, by 1914 the USA had emerged as a prosperous and strong regional power, with a growing influence over world financial markets and a new-found commitment to its own form of imperialistic expansion.

Questions

1. Why did the USA move away from its traditional isolationist foreign policy in the period 1871–1914?
2. How far was President Theodore Roosevelt responsible for the USA's move towards a more expansionist foreign policy?
3. Look at the cartoon in Source A opposite. What does it suggest about the emergence of the USA as a world power by the time it was published in 1906?

Source A

A cartoon published in the American magazine Puck in 1906.



The emergence of Japan as a world power

Japan before 1871

In the first half of the 19th century, Japan was still an underdeveloped country with an almost medieval social structure. It had a rigid class system, with the warlike Samurai and their leader, the shogun, holding supreme power. Farming, transport and industry had changed little for centuries, and the economy was still largely based on **bartering** rather than money. Even taxes were paid in rice.

bartering
The trading of goods without the use of money; exchanging one thing in payment for another.

The Japanese did not welcome foreigners, and they successfully resisted pressure to establish trading rights with other nations. Russia (1804), Britain (1842) and the USA (1853) all tried to open up trade with Japan – and all failed. The USA in particular was desperate to find new markets for its rapidly expanding industrial output. The American whaling fleet also needed access to Japanese ports in order to take on vital supplies, especially coal. Confronted with obstinate resistance, the Americans finally sent a fleet of warships in 1854. Samurai swords were no match for modern guns, and the Japanese had no alternative but to open up their borders to trade with the West.

This posed an enormous risk to Japan. With army backing, European merchants had already seized control of large areas of China, imposing their own laws and destroying local culture. Fearing that their country would similarly be divided up between competing foreign powers, in 1867 the Japanese people demanded the restoration of an emperor as head of government, instead of the military shogun. Emperor Mutsuhito and his Meiji government set about modernising Japan in order to resist the imperial powers. By 1869, they had established a centralised administration, uniting all the previously independent regions of Japan under one government.

Rapid modernisation and military development

private enterprise
Businesses owned and managed by individuals, free from government restrictions.

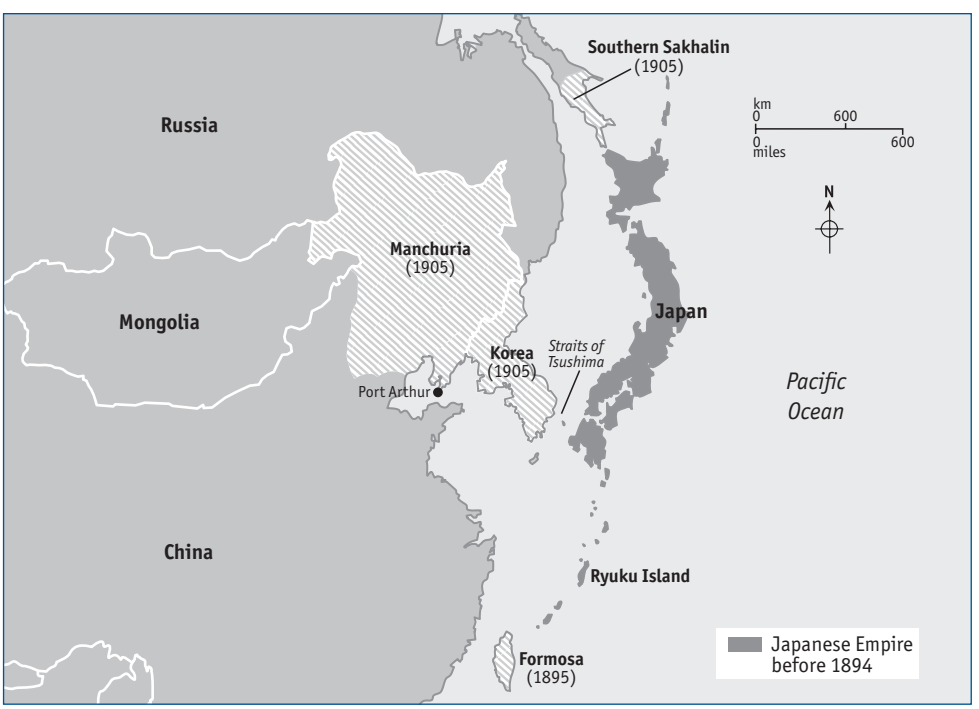
The Japanese realised that to maintain their independence they would have to develop their own military capabilities. This could not be achieved without rapid modernisation and industrialisation. The Japanese modelled their education system, form of government, army, navy and industry on those of the foreign nations whose presence they most feared. Mines, iron foundries, factories and shipyards were quickly developed. Some of these were set up by the government and then handed over to **private enterprise**.

Others were built by former Samurai warriors, such as Iwasaki Yataro, who founded the Mitsubishi shipyards. Railways and telegraph lines were laid to support industrial development and to assist the government with its plans to unify the country. To cover the costs of this swift modernisation, Japan concentrated on promoting its export trade, especially in textiles.

Increasing prosperity assisted the development of Japan's military strength. One-third of the national budget was spent on the army and navy. Military service became compulsory for all adult males and, by 1894, Japan possessed 28 modern warships. In schools, children were taught to be patriotic and to show total obedience to the emperor. The old Shinto religion, which claimed that the emperor was descended from a god, was revived for the same reason.

Modernisation helped Japan maintain its independence, and in a remarkably short period of time it developed from being a country threatened by the imperialistic ambitions of other nations to one capable of becoming an imperial power in its own right.

Figure 1.7 *A map showing Japanese expansion 1894–1905*



The ongoing disintegration of the Chinese Empire (see page 105) provided the opportunity for Japan to test its new military strength. Disputes over which country should control Korea led to a short war in 1894. The new, modern Japanese army quickly overran Korea, Manchuria and parts of China itself. When the Chinese capital Peking came under threat, China surrendered. By the terms of the Shimonoseki Treaty (1895), Japan gained Formosa and Port Arthur. Korea was declared independent of Chinese influence.

Note:

Russia was the main instigator of the agreement known as the Triple Intervention. France supported Russia in the hope of maintaining their alliance, to avoid becoming diplomatically isolated in Europe. Germany became involved in exchange for Russian support for its own colonial ambitions elsewhere in the world.

Note:

By the terms of the Anglo–Japanese Alliance (1902), Britain and Japan agreed to remain neutral if either country was involved in war. Britain recognised Japan's rights in Korea. Japan agreed to use its fleet to help protect British interests in the Far East. The treaty marked the end of Britain's isolationism. It was renewed and extended in 1905 and 1911.

Figure 1.8 A British cartoon from 1905 commenting on the Anglo–Japanese Alliance

However, Japan was not the only nation with an interest in China. France, Russia and Germany resented Japan's intrusion into an area where they each had vested interests. Russia wanted control of Port Arthur, since it would provide a warm-water (ice-free) port from which to expand its influence in the Far East. The Triple Intervention of these three powerful European nations forced Japan to hand over control of Port Arthur to Russia. This caused considerable resentment in Japan, which decided to build more warships and wait for the opportunity to gain revenge against the Russians.

The Russo–Japanese War 1904–05

Russian expansion in the Far East continued. In 1900, for example, Russia occupied the whole of Manchuria. This caused alarm in Britain, which feared that its own Far Eastern interests were under threat. This was one of the reasons why Britain signed the Anglo–Japanese Alliance in 1902. The treaty was a major achievement for Japan. It was the first time that the country had been recognised as an equal by one of the major European powers, and the agreement clearly established Japan's emergence on to the global stage. In Britain, too, the alliance was greeted favourably.

Japan now felt strong enough to seek a settlement with Russia. The Japanese were prepared to recognise Russian rights in Manchuria in exchange for Japanese rights in Korea. Convinced of their military superiority, the Russians refused to negotiate with the Japanese and, instead, invaded Korea. The Japanese response was rapid, dramatic and devastating, and brought Japan into a war with one of the world's great powers.

On 9 February 1904, Japanese warships entered Port Arthur, where a number of Russian ships were docked, totally unprepared for battle. Two Russian battleships and a cruiser were destroyed by Japanese torpedoes. The Russian fleet was widely dispersed around the globe and Russian soldiers were forced to endure a lengthy overland trip across Asia to reach Port Arthur and take up arms against the Japanese. Under such circumstances, Japan clearly had the advantage. It quickly established control over the local seas, which allowed it to move troops around without resistance. Once Port Arthur was taken the Japanese moved into Manchuria, forcing the Russian troops to retreat to Mukden. After a three-month siege involving over 1 million soldiers on both sides – and at the height of a bitter winter – Mukden fell to the Japanese.

Russia's last hope lay with its fleet in the Baltic Sea, but the ships' journey to the Far East was long, tortuous and eventful. While steaming through the North Sea, the Russian ships mistook some British fishing boats for warships, and fired on them. The British were outraged and for a time the Russian fleet was pursued by a vastly superior fleet of British ships. As Britain was allied to Japan, it seemed likely that the rival fleets would engage in battle. While diplomatic negotiations succeeded in preventing this, Britain denied the Russian fleet access to the Suez Canal, forcing it to take the far longer route around Africa. Laden down with coal to fuel the steam engines, the Russian ships made slow progress and did not arrive in the Straits of Tsushima between Korea and Japan until May 1905.

The battle began on 27 May, as Russian and Japanese ships finally faced each other in the straits. The slow-moving and outdated Russian vessels could not compete with Japan's modern warships, which were under the command of Admiral Togo Heihachiro. By the following day, Japan had defeated the Russian navy. Facing humiliation abroad and revolution at home, the Russian tsar, Nicholas II, signed the Treaty of Portsmouth with Japan. Russian influence in Manchuria was effectively ended, and Japan's rights over Korea were formally recognised.

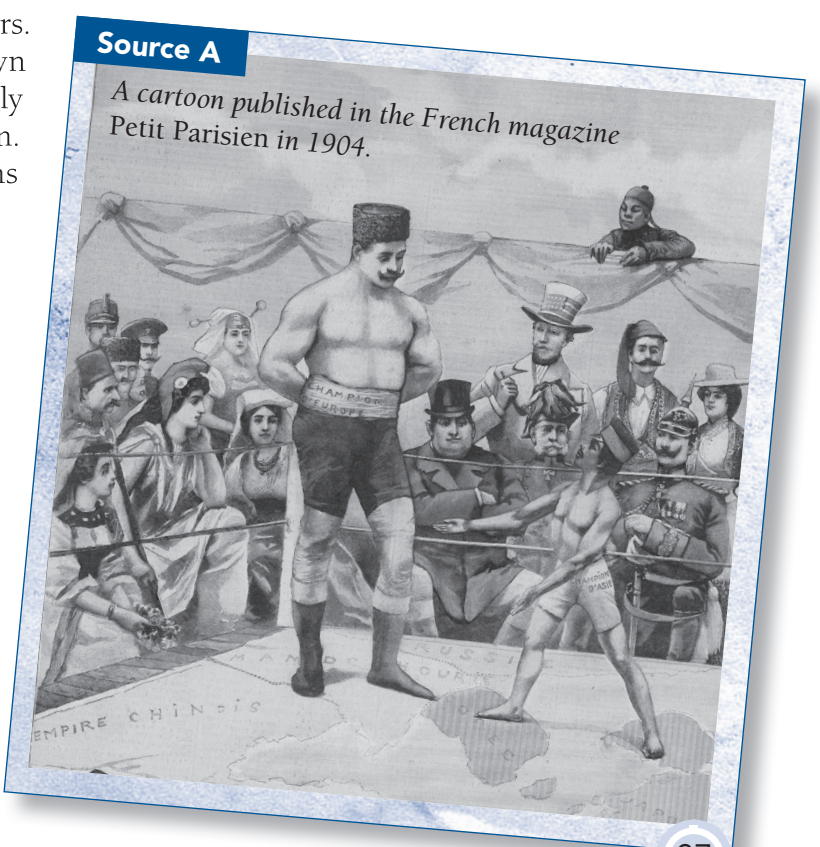
In the space of less than 50 years, Japan had developed into a modern, industrial country with the military capacity to defeat a major European power. Japan entered the 20th century as an imperial nation, perceived as the champion of Asia against the Western powers. Those powers, keen to protect and extend their own trading activities in the Far East, grew increasingly concerned by Japanese expansion within the region. This concern was heightened by Japan's actions during the First World War (see page 37).

Note:

The Treaty of Portsmouth was signed on 5 September 1905, following negotiations at Portsmouth Naval Base in New Hampshire, USA. It was a sign of the USA's growing importance in international affairs that President Roosevelt played a significant role in bringing Japan and Russia to the negotiating table.

Source A

A cartoon published in the French magazine Petit Parisien in 1904.



Questions

1. To what extent had Japan become a major world power by 1905?
2. Explain why Japan was able to defeat one of the major European powers in the Russo–Japanese War.
3. Source A opposite is a French illustration from 1904. It shows other countries looking on while the champion of Europe (Russia) takes on the champion of Asia (Japan). What can historians learn from this illustration?

The alliance system in Europe

The unification of Germany

The new German Reich (empire) was established on 18 January 1871, at the Palace of Versailles in France. The separate kingdoms of the North German Confederation and the South German States were unified as a single country – Germany. The man primarily responsible for this was **Otto von Bismarck**.

By the middle of the 19th century Austria controlled many of the states in southern Germany, but in 1866 Bismarck's Prussian troops defeated Austria and destroyed its position as the leading German-speaking power in Europe. In 1867, Austria formed a monarchic union with the Kingdom of Hungary, but its ruling family, the Habsburgs, presided over a disjointed and multinational empire. The Franco–Prussian War of 1870–71 enabled Bismarck to complete his plans to unify Germany, leaving France defeated and bitter. By the terms of the Treaty of Frankfurt (1871), Germany took the French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, and forced France to pay a vast sum of money in war compensation. Resentment at the loss of its land, and fear of this powerful new German nation, influenced French foreign policy for many years to come.

Key figure

Otto von Bismarck (1815–98)

Bismarck became prime minister of Prussia in 1862. He led the state during the Franco–Prussian War of 1870–71, and afterwards was appointed as the first chancellor of the new united German Empire, a position he held until 1890.

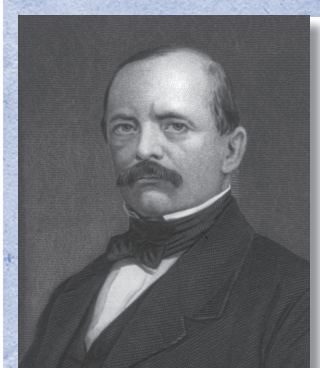


Figure 1.9 Two maps showing Europe before (left) and after (right) the unification of Germany in 1871

The unification of Germany in 1871 heralded a period of relative stability in relations between the major European powers of Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia. None of these countries wanted war with one another and so, as we have seen, their rivalries were played out not in Europe but in the distant lands of Africa and Asia.

Bismarck's policies played a significant part in maintaining this stability within Europe. Although Germany was now the dominant power on the continent – both economically and militarily – Bismarck understood that it remained vulnerable. Situated as it was at the heart of Europe, Germany was open to attack from three sides: from France to the west, from Russia to the east and from Austria-Hungary to the south. The chancellor's main concern was to isolate potential enemies, especially France, which he knew would be looking for revenge after its costly defeat in the Franco–Prussian War. Bismarck therefore set out to establish a series of friendly agreements with other European countries, and largely kept Germany out of the race for overseas possessions in an effort to avoid conflict with other potential rivals such as Britain.

Bismarck's alliances

Bismarck's attempts to ensure German security led to a series of alliances.

The Three Emperors' League (*Dreikaiserbund*) 1873

In 1873, Bismarck negotiated an agreement between Tsar Alexander II of Russia, Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria-Hungary and Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany. In addition to isolating France, Bismarck hoped that regular meetings between the three monarchs would help to reduce disputes between Austria-Hungary and Russia over the Balkans. The Three Emperors' League was largely unsuccessful, mainly because of ongoing disputes between Germany's two allies. By 1879, the league had effectively collapsed.

The Dual Alliance 1879

This was a defensive alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary. Each country agreed to come to the other's aid in the event of an attack by Russia. Germany and Austria-Hungary also agreed to remain neutral if either was attacked by another country, such as France.

The Triple Alliance 1882

This was, in effect, an extension of the Dual Alliance. Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy agreed to offer each other mutual support in the event of an attack by any of the other great powers. Italy's reasons for joining the alliance were partly to preserve its own national security, but also because it was angry at France for seizing Tunisia the previous year. Italy had harboured its own aspirations for taking control of this area.

Note:
Russia and Austria-Hungary had rival claims to parts of the Balkans, an area of southern Europe. Austria-Hungary argued that the region was part of the Habsburg Empire. Russia was keen to gain access to a warm-water port on the Black Sea.

The Reinsurance Treaty 1887

Despite the existence of the Triple Alliance, Bismarck's plan to isolate France had not been effective. Austria-Hungary and Italy were traditional enemies, and neither could boast a strong army to come to Germany's aid in the event of a French attack. More importantly, the loss of an effective alliance with Russia meant that Germany remained vulnerable to attack from both west and east if France and Russia should form an alliance of their own. In an effort to avoid this possibility, Bismarck signed the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia in 1887. This guaranteed German and Russian neutrality in any war, as long as Germany did not attack France, or Russia attack Austria-Hungary.

All these alliances, so carefully negotiated by Bismarck, were entirely defensive in character and were intended to preserve peace. However, they were formed by treaties whose terms were secret, and this naturally gave rise to concerns amongst the powers not involved in the negotiations. These suspicions grew when Germany began to adopt a more aggressive approach to foreign affairs.

Key figure

Wilhelm II (1859–1941)

Wilhelm became Kaiser of Germany in 1888, and almost immediately came into conflict with his chancellor Bismarck. Boastful and impetuous, Wilhelm was determined to increase German power, despite Bismarck's warnings that this would lead to the country's downfall. Wilhelm's popularity dwindled in the early years of the 20th century, and he abdicated in 1918, towards the end of the First World War.

Uniting against Germany

In 1890, the German Kaiser, **Wilhelm II**, dismissed Bismarck as chancellor and embarked on a less cautious approach to foreign policy. This included actively seeking overseas possessions and developing the German navy. These actions had the effect of pushing France, Russia and Britain closer together.

Note:

Under the direction of naval chief Admiral Tirpitz, Germany rapidly expanded its naval capabilities. In 1900, a Navy Law ordered the building of 41 battleships and 60 cruisers. Such activity naturally concerned other European nations, particularly Britain, whose status as the most powerful naval nation in the world had been unchallenged for centuries.

The Franco–Russian Alliance 1894

When Wilhelm II allowed the Reinsurance Treaty to lapse in 1890, Russia felt threatened. Despite the political differences between France and Russia (France was a republic, while Russia was an absolute monarchy in which the tsar exercised total control), the two countries had enjoyed steadily improving relations. From 1888, France – desperate to avoid being isolated, and fearing Germany's increasing power – provided Russia with cheap loans to finance improvements in its military capabilities. Both countries were afraid of what might result from the Triple Alliance (see page 29) so they began negotiations for an alliance of their own. Like the Triple Alliance, the resulting agreement (the Franco–Russian Alliance) was a defensive one. It stated that if either country was attacked, the other would come to its aid. It was agreed that the Franco–Russian Alliance would remain in place as long as the Triple Alliance existed.

German naval development

Britain remained largely uninvolved in European affairs during the last quarter of the 19th century. Peace on the continent had enabled Britain to increase its overseas possessions without serious challenge. As an island protected by its undisputed naval supremacy, Britain had adopted a policy of 'splendid isolation', by which it stayed out of European politics and concentrated on the expansion of its own empire. However, Germany's naval programme caused panic in Britain. Germany had few overseas possessions to protect and could concentrate its naval forces in the North Sea. In contrast, the British navy was dispersed around the globe to protect its empire. In response to German naval development, therefore, Britain embarked on its own building programme (including the launch of the super-battleship *Dreadnought* in 1906). Germany responded in kind, and a naval arms race developed that only increased the tension between the two countries.

The Anglo–Japanese Alliance 1902

Already concerned by the reaction of the European powers to its involvement in the Boer Wars (see page 14), the threat posed by German naval development led Britain to depart from its isolationist policies and look towards forming alliances with other countries. The first example of this was the Anglo–Japanese Alliance of 1902. This offered some protection to British possessions in the Far East in the event of war. However, far more surprising – certainly to the Germans – was Britain's attempts to gain increased co-operation with its traditional enemy, France.

The Entente Cordiale 1904

Following diplomatic talks between British and French officials in 1903, King Edward VII's successful visit to France in 1904 led to the Entente Cordiale. This was a series of agreements designed to settle a number of disputes that had long soured relations between the two countries. For example, France finally recognised British control of Egypt in exchange for Britain's recognition of French control in Morocco. The Entente Cordiale provided France with additional security against the threat from Germany and its Triple Alliance cohorts. For Britain, concerned by the massive growth in Germany's military capabilities, it offered an end to European isolation.

The Anglo–Russian Entente 1907

Just like France and Britain, Russia had become increasingly fearful of Germany's intentions, and regarded the Triple Alliance as a major threat to its security. Russia was deeply concerned that Austria-Hungary and Germany intended to take over large parts of the Balkans, threatening Russian access through the Dardanelles – a vital trade route that accounted for 40% of Russian exports.

Note:
The Dardanelles was a strait between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. With most of Russia's own ports iced up for large parts of the year, access through the Dardanelles was essential for Russian trade.

Russia was a vast country, and potentially had the largest army of all the major European powers. However, it was economically underdeveloped and its defeat in the Russo–Japanese War (see pages 26–27) highlighted major deficiencies in an army hindered by ineffective leadership and obsolete equipment. For Britain, Russia's defeat suggested that the country was no longer a serious challenger to its own imperial ambitions in the Far East. Germany was now a much bigger threat. In 1907, therefore, an Anglo–Russian Entente was agreed.

The Triple Entente 1907

The Anglo–Russian Entente effectively tied France, Britain and Russia together in a series of friendly alliances by which the three countries agreed to support each other in the event of any of them being attacked. This became known as the Triple Entente.

By 1907, therefore, Europe was divided into two opposing camps – the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. Although both had been created for defensive purposes, each side was deeply suspicious of the aims and motives of the other. As this mistrust grew, the arms race became considerably more sinister.

Figure 1.10 A map of Europe in 1914 showing the two rival alliances: the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente

The road to war

Kaiser Wilhelm II was convinced that the Triple Entente was a conspiracy to encircle and subsequently attack Germany. In 1913, fearful of a combined French and Russian invasion, Germany began increasing its standing army. Austria-Hungary did the same. The French interpreted this as the start of preparations to attack France itself, and in response extended their compulsory military service from two to three years. They also increased expenditure on weapons. With financial assistance from France, Russia began rebuilding its armed forces and developing better transport systems to help with more rapid mobilisation in the event of war. By 1910, France, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Germany had all developed offensive plans to be deployed if and when war broke out. Indeed, the German plan had been developed by the military strategist Alfred von Schlieffen as early as 1904.

> **Note:**
> Germany's concern had always been the prospect of war on two fronts: against France in the west and Russia in the east. The Schlieffen Plan was based on the assumption that, because of its vast size, Russia would take longer to mobilise – and longer to defeat in a war – than France. The plan therefore aimed to defeat France quickly by a surprise attack through neutral Belgium, freeing the Germans to concentrate on war against Russia in the east.

The period from 1907 to 1914 witnessed an uneasy peace in Europe. In many ways, the alliance system seemed to be serving the purpose for which it had originally been intended: preventing relatively minor incidents escalating into full-scale war. In 1911, for example, when France sent troops to put down a rebellion in Morocco, Germany sent a gunboat in protest – a clear threat of war. Britain's announcement that it would support France over this issue made the Germans back down. In truth, Britain was acting out of self-interest rather than a duty to enforce its formal commitments to France; gaining control of a Moroccan port would have provided the German navy with a base from which to threaten British trade routes.

It was the vested interests of Austria-Hungary and Russia that finally ended the fragile peace. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was a mixture of many different nationalities and ethnic groups, including Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, Poles, Serbs, Ruthenians, Romanians, Croats, Slovaks, Italians and Slovenes (see map on page 34). Many of these groups had been demanding independence from the empire for some years, but Serbia posed the biggest threat to Austro-Hungarian unity. Serbian **nationalists** increasingly claimed that those parts of the Habsburg lands that contained a predominantly Serb population should become part of a Greater Serbia. If Austria-Hungary gave in to such demands it would undoubtedly lead to the spread of nationalism elsewhere within the empire, with devastating results.

nationalists
People with a common bond such as nationality, culture or language, who want the right to govern themselves rather than being ruled by another country or culture.

It was therefore in Austria-Hungary's interests to remove this problem by going to war with Serbia. The problem was how Russia would react to this move. The Russians would see a declaration of war as an attempt by Austria-Hungary to extend its empire in the area. Desperate to retain its warm-water access from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean through the Dardanelles, Russia would undoubtedly support Serbia. In an attempt to prevent the problem escalating into a full-scale war, both Britain and Germany used their influence to restrain Austria-Hungary. The willingness of the British government to co-operate with Germany over this issue led the Germans to believe that Britain could be detached from its alliance with France and Russia. Even as late as 1913, Germany was urging Austria-Hungary not to go to war with Serbia.

Figure 1.11 *A map showing the main nationalities and ethnic groups in the Austro-Hungarian Empire before the First World War*

The situation reached a critical point in June 1914, when a Serbian nationalist assassinated the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, in Sarajevo. Austria-Hungary resolved to crush Serbia once and for all, and Germany now encouraged this course of action. It seemed that the very system of alliances that had been established to provide peace and security now made a full-scale war inevitable.

In July 1914, Austria-Hungary issued Serbia with a series of demands. Believing that these threatened its independence, Serbia refused to accept all of them. Consequently, on 28 July, Austria-Hungary declared war on the Balkan nation. The following day Russia began mobilising its forces, and shortly afterwards declared war in defence of Serbia and to protect its own interests in the region. Germany issued an ultimatum to Russia – demobilise or face war with Germany as well. Russia refused to back down.

Germany thus declared war on Russia and – due to the necessities outlined by the Schlieffen Plan (see page 33) – on France, too. When German troops entered Belgium on their way to attack France, Britain honoured its 1839 commitment to defend Belgian neutrality, and declared war on Germany.

In the capitals of Europe, the outbreak of the First World War was greeted almost with a sense of relief. Tensions had been simmering for years, and by this point most nations both expected war and had prepared for it. The long period of uncertainty was finally over. In 1914, however, few could have predicted that this would be a war unlike any the world had seen before. Certainly no one could have foreseen the impact it would have on international relations for the remainder of the 20th century.

A European conflict becomes a world war

At the start, it was widely assumed that the war would be a fast-moving affair involving a series of battles between rival cavalry units. Most people believed it would be 'over by Christmas'. Within a few months, however, it became clear that this outlook was vastly optimistic. The conflict rapidly became a **war of attrition**, in which soldiers of all nationalities found themselves trapped in trenches, risking their lives in order to gain a few metres of land. Modern weaponry had rendered traditional methods of warfare obsolete. Ultimately, the First World War lasted 52 months and caused the death of around 20 million people, many of them civilians.

war of attrition
A conflict in which each side tries to wear down and slowly destroy its enemy by a process of constant attacks and steady killing.

Initially, the war was a purely European affair involving the Central Powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria against the Allied Powers of Britain, France and Russia. Although Italy was a member of the Triple Alliance, when the war broke out it decided to remain neutral, arguing that its alliance with Germany was defensive and that Austria-Hungary's aggression released Italy from any obligation to join the Central Powers. In April 1915, won over by promises from Britain and France that it would gain possession of large areas of territory in the Tyrol and on the Adriatic Sea (Dalmatia and Istria), Italy entered the war on the side of the Allied Powers.

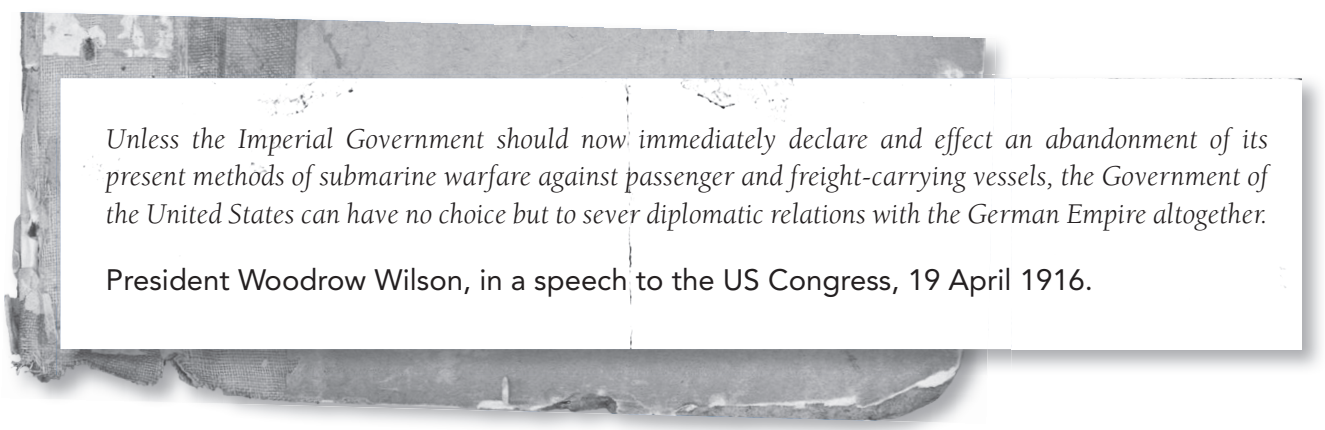
Note:
Britain and France hoped that Italy would be in a position to put increased pressure on the Central Powers. In addition to fighting on both the Western and Eastern fronts, Italy's support for the Allies meant that the Central Powers would now be threatened from the south, too.

What began as a conflict between the major European powers soon began to involve people from far-flung regions of the world, as European nations deployed soldiers from their distant colonies. The British army, for example, included men from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Africa and the Indian subcontinent.

The USA enters the war

To begin with, the USA saw no reason to become involved in a war raging thousands of miles away. Its isolationist tradition meant that Americans were unwilling to interfere in European affairs. By 1917, however, the situation had changed.

The USA's attempts to maintain its trading links with Europe were increasingly undermined by German U-boats (submarines). Convinced that the USA was supplying Britain and its allies with weapons, Germany regularly attacked US ships crossing the Atlantic. At first, the Germans would issue warnings to the ships so that passengers could be evacuated before the attack began. In 1915, however, the *Lusitania* was sunk without warning, killing more than 120 Americans. In 1916, another American ship, the *Sussex*, suffered the same fate. There was outrage across the USA, and President Woodrow Wilson issued a stark warning to Germany.



Unless the Imperial Government should now immediately declare and effect an abandonment of its present methods of submarine warfare against passenger and freight-carrying vessels, the Government of the United States can have no choice but to sever diplomatic relations with the German Empire altogether.

President Woodrow Wilson, in a speech to the US Congress, 19 April 1916.

Note:
Some historians believe that the USA had never really been neutral, and had in fact been supporting the Allied cause by providing weapons and supplies since war broke out in 1914.

In addition, the USA was concerned by intelligence it received that Germany was trying to provoke Mexico and Japan into declaring war against the USA. This seemed to be an attempt by Germany to keep the Americans out of the war in Europe. On 6 April 1917, with no sign of the U-boat campaign ceasing, the USA declared war on Germany. President Wilson described this as 'an act of high principle and idealism … a crusade to make the world safe for democracy'.

Japan enters the war

Honouring its alliance with Britain, Japan declared war on Germany in 1914. Its primary role was to secure the sea lanes of the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean against the German navy. While the Western powers were fully occupied fighting the war in Europe, Japan took advantage of their absence from the Far East in a number of ways:

- Japan began to supply the region with goods that the Europeans could no longer provide. Between 1914 and 1918, Japan's exports of cotton cloth increased threefold, while its heavy industry was greatly expanded to fill the gap left by the absence of European imports of iron, steel and chemicals.
- Throughout the war, Japan supplied Britain and its Allies with shipping and other goods.
- To assist with this surge in exports, the Japanese merchant fleet almost doubled in size during the war years.
- Japan attacked the German-controlled regions of China's Shantung Province. This enabled Japan to gain greater influence in China without the opposition of the Western powers.
- In January 1915, Japan presented the Chinese with what became known as the Twenty-One Demands. These were designed to dramatically increase Japanese political and economic power and influence over much of China. In effect, China would cease to be an independent country. The Chinese had no doubt that Japan would declare war on them if they refused to meet the demands. Despite a later revision of these demands, Japan was still able to extend its power base in China.
- Between 1916 and 1918, Japan provided the Chinese with a series of loans, thereby increasing its financial, commercial and economic influence over China.
- While the Western powers, particularly Britain and the USA, were greatly concerned by Japanese activities in the Far East, they could do little about it. Japan was a vital ally in the war against Germany.

Note:
Under pressure from the USA, Britain and other countries with a vested interest in China, Japan was eventually forced to reduce its Twenty-One Demands. However, even the revised demands granted Japan similar rights in China to those enjoyed by the other great powers. Japan's use of threats and bullying tactics angered the Chinese and added to the other powers' growing suspicion of Japan.

Historical debate

Did the development of two rival alliance systems (the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente) make a major war inevitable?

Complex issues, such as the causes of the First World War, can be interpreted in different ways. It is not surprising, therefore, that historians often differ in their opinions about key issues. For example, historians disagree about the question above. The American diplomat and historian George Kennan was probably the first to suggest that the existence of the two rival alliances made a European war inevitable. More recently, historians have argued against this. The claims used by historians to support their conflicting opinions on this question are summarised in the table on page 38.

Yes	No
The alliances caused uncertainty, fear and tension in Europe.	Both alliances were based on vague treaties of friendship. They did not compel countries to support each other in war. For example, when Russia was losing its war against Japan in 1905, France offered no help. Italy, though a member of the Triple Alliance, entered the First World War in 1915 *against* Germany.
There was an 'arms race' between the two alliances, leading to the existence of two well-armed rival camps.	Between 1907 and 1914, the alliances actually helped to maintain peace, preventing incidents escalating into war. For example, in 1911 Britain's threat to support France over the issue of Morocco led Germany to back down.
German leaders were convinced that the Triple Entente was an attempt to encircle and attack Germany.	Although Germany supported Austria-Hungary in its war against Serbia in 1914, it had not done so in 1913.
Germany devised the Schlieffen Plan because of its fears about the intentions of the Triple Entente.	The European powers went to war in order to protect their own interests, not because of the alliance system.
France helped Russia to increase its military strength and speed of mobilisation.	
Austria-Hungary would not have declared war on Serbia without the certain knowledge that Germany would support it.	
The opposing sides in the First World War largely mirrored the two alliances – Germany and Austria-Hungary fought against France, Russia and Britain.	

Questions

1. Which side of the argument outlined in the historical debate section above is the more convincing and why?

2. Which of the following posed the greatest threat to international peace in the period from 1871 to 1914 and why?

   - Imperial rivalry over the 'scramble for Africa'.
   - The emergence of the USA as a major world power.
   - The emergence of Japan as a major world power.
   - Rivalry between Germany and France.
   - Rivalry between Britain and Germany.

Key issues

The key features of this chapter are:

- the wave of imperialistic expansion by European nations, particularly in Africa
- major economic growth within the USA, leading to a significant change in US foreign policy and its increasing involvement in international affairs
- the rapid industrialisation and militarisation of Japan, leading to its expansion in Asia and conflict with a major European power – Russia
- the period of peace and stability in Europe, followed by increasing tensions and the development of the rival Triple Alliance and Triple Entente
- the increasing conflict between the vested interests of the major European powers, leading to the outbreak of the First World War.

Revision questions

1 How successful was Bismarck's foreign policy between 1871 and 1890?

2 In what ways did German foreign policy change after 1890?

3 Did the changes to German foreign policy after 1890 make a major war more or less likely?

4 Why was Serbian nationalism such a threat to Austria-Hungary?

5 Explain why each of the following countries was keen to form alliances with other European nations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries:

- Germany
- France
- Russia
- Britain

Further reading

Anderson, M. S. *The Ascendancy of Europe 1815–1914*. London, UK. Longman. 2003.

Brogan, H. *The Penguin History of the USA*. London, UK. Penguin. 2001.

Culpin, C., Evans E. and Henig, R. *Modern Europe 1870–1945*. London, UK. Longman. 1997.

Farmer A. and Sanders, V. *An Introduction to American History 1860–1990*. London, UK. Hodder. 2002.

Huffman, J. L. *Japan in World History*. New York, USA. Oxford University Press. 2010.

Pakenham, T. *The Scramble for Africa*. London, UK. Abacus. 1992.