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**Empire: From Conquest to Control**

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In 1884, the Berlin Conference that set off the scramble for colonies in Africa and other parts of the world laid down the basic principle that in order to establish the formal right of rule over a colony, a European power had to establish ‘effective occupation’. This applied, however, only to coastal areas, which at the time were the main concern of most European powers in Africa. The hinterland of continental Africa, which was the subject of the main phase of the ‘scramble’, was a different matter. Here, European states drew straight lines across the map with complete disregard for geographical features, delimiting the territories they claimed from one another but leaving them still to be brought under real control. In many ways the story of colonization in the 1890s and 1900s is the story of how European empires tried to convert paper colonies into real colonies.

In my last lecture I noted how in some cases this attempt met with failure, most notably with the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1896. Similarly, the Boxer rebellion in China deterred European powers from converting treaty ports into hubs of real colonization. But these were exceptions. In most of Africa, and many parts of the Pacific, European powers moved from the 1890s onwards to establish their control over the land they now claimed as their own.

What drove them to do so were two separate but ultimately intermeshing influences. The first was ideological. The 1880s ushered in the age of empire, the decades of imperialism – a word that first entered the English language in the 1870s and was, as J. A. Hobson noted in 1900, ‘on everybody’s lips…used to denote the most powerful movement in the current politics of the western world’. Imperialism was propagated by governments keen to gain popular support for the principle of maintaining, usually at some cost, overseas possessions. The cult of empire began in Britain already in the 1870s with the proclamation of Queen Victoria as empress of India. Within a few years, British royal ceremonies, including Queen Victoria’s golden and diamond jubilees and the coronation of King Edward VII in 1902, were featuring maharajas and colonial troops. As the *Daily Mail* reported in 1897, the diamond jubilee procession displayed ‘new types, new realms at every couple of yards, an anthropological museum – a living gazetteer of the British Empire. With them came their English officers, whom they obey and follow like children’. Huge publicity was given to the ceremonies – durbars – held in India in 1877 to proclaim Queen Victoria Empress of India, and in 1902 and 1911 to celebrate the coronation of her successors. 1902 saw the inauguration of ‘Empire Day’ in Britain, especially directed at schools, and imperial propaganda could be found everywhere, on railway bookstalls, in political meetings, in novels, magazines and history books and even in the ‘empire plate’ manufactured for the Diamond Jubilee in 1897. The coronation of Edward VII in particular was given a strong imperial flavour, to celebrate, as a contemporary put it, ‘the recognition, by a free democracy, of a hereditary crown, as a symbol of the world-wide dominion of their race’.

International expositions, a tradition inaugurated by Britain’s Great Exhibition of 1851, began to include ‘colonial pavilions’ – 18 of them at the Paris exposition of 1889, clustering around the Eiffel Tower that had been specially built for the occasion.Colonial museums opened in most European countries to display looted artifacts, and most remarkably perhaps, zoos began to include ‘native villages’ among their exhibits. Hagenbeck’s Tierpark in Hamburg for example showed a series of African and other indigenous groups to gawping crowds of visitors who – at a safe distance, to avoid the danger of physical contact - could observe the ‘primitive world’ that Germany had conquered in Africa.

In Belgium in the 1880s and 1890s exhibitions were held including a typical Congolese village, where imported Africans were told to do what they normally did at home, which was mostly not much, since at home they would have been out hunting or in the fields. A pool was provided and stocked with fish, and spectators threw coins in for the Congolese to dive for. Sometimes they threw in bottles of gin and brandy too, to make them drunk. Sometimes stages were set up for the men to re-enact battles with spears and shields. The Congolese had to go around half-naked in a display of ‘authenticity’ and in cold weather many of them became ill. Such displays were put on to underline European superiority, so there was no interest in, for example, getting the villagers to make or display artworks or put on musical events. In a similar way, Buffalo Bill’s enormously popular Wild West Show, which toured Europe at this time, demonstrated the inferiority of Native Americans, doomed to extinction in battle with the better armed forces of civilization.

European notions of superiority were caricatured but also reaffirmed in cartoons of the time: here for example is one portraying a new governor of German East Africa as a ‘new idol’ replacing or perhaps just adding to the ones already worshipped by the native heathens.All this served to enlist the middle classes and potentially too the working classes in patriotic enthusiasm for the ideals of empire, a tactic that was more successful in some countries, notably Britain, than others. The press followed colonial campaigns closely and whipped up jingoistic sentiment, expressed in events such as the triumph of the British over the Ashanti in the 1870s.Imperial enthusiasm reached new heights with the emergence of mass-circulation newspapers like the *Daily Mail*, fuelling events such as the popular celebrations in London of the relief of Mafeking during the Boer War.The age of high imperialism coincided with the coming of the age of mass communications and the popular press, and both fed off each other.

The events of the Boer War pointed to the other major force apart from imperialist ideology driving forward European powers’ establishment of control over their colonies, and that was, the actions and policies of men on the ground, in the colonies themselves. For most of the nineteenth century it was missionaries, traders and explorers who brought in the colonizing state to further their interests or, more frequently, to rescue them when they got into trouble with indigenous peoples. In some colonies, however, in the age of high imperialism, European settlers began arriving in ever increasing numbers and, with or without the approval of the colonial state, seizing land for cattle farming or rubber or palm oil plantations. The clashes such actions sparked were among the most violent in the history of European empire. And nowhere were they more dramatic than in the German colony of South-west Africa, today’s Namibia.

South-west Africa had begun as a protectorate run by a limited company, but as early as 1888 the company failed and the state was obliged to take over. Much of the land was desert or semi-arid and was inhabited by nomadic cattle herders of the Herero and Nama tribes. During the 1890s German settlers moved in and began setting up cattle ranches, fencing off the land from the nomads, whose livelihood was also being undermined by an outbreak of a fatal cattle disease, *Rinderpest*, at the end of the 1890s. The rapidly mounting pace of land seizures by the colonial government in the early 1900s led eventually to attacks on German farmers, resulting in around 150 settler deaths by 1904, when the attacks reached a peak. Kaiser Wilhelm II took this as a provocation, even a personal insult. Germany was not going to be humiliated as Italy had been in Ethiopia in 1896.

14,000 German troops were dispatched from Berlin under General Lothar von Trotha, a hard-line Prussian army officer with previous colonial experience. ‘I know’ he said, ‘that African tribes yield only to violence. To exercise this violence with crass terrorism and even with gruesomeness was and is my policy.’ After defeating a Herero force at Waterberg, Trotha announced: ‘Any Herero found inside the German frontier, with or without a gun or cattle, will be executed.’ Herero cattle-herders caught in the action were shot or hanged on the spot, while the remaining men, along with Herero women and children, were driven into the desert and left to starve. The few who emerged alive were little more than skeletons, as this contemporary photograph shows *(see powerpoint)*.The Chief of the General Staff in Berlin, Alfred von Schlieffen, in thrall, like all Prussian officers, to the supposedly Clausewitzian doctrine that the aim of a war must be the total annihilation of the enemy force, praised von Trotha’s campaign as ‘brilliant’, especially his use of the desert to complete what he called approvingly ‘the extermination of the Herero nation’. Popular commemorative books were printed celebrating the triumph of German arms in the war.

Social Democratic and Catholic Centre Party politicians were vocal in their condemnation. In the elections called by Reich Chancellor Bülow in the face of this storm of criticism, Social Democratic papers condemned ‘the way our national honour is preserved in Africa’. Supporters of the government riposted by suggesting that if the Social Democrats triumphed, the Africans would destroy German settlements and kill the colonists, while the government was defending them and would create a peaceful and prosperous South-west Africa, though one, the picture suggested, seemingly without Africans at all. It urged the electorate to ‘vote for the honour of the Fatherland against its destroyers!’

The civilian governor of the colony, Theodor Leutwein, elbowed aside by the military because of his policy of compromise with the Herero, protested to Bülow about the action and declared the extermination a ‘grave mistake’. He was dismissed for his pains. However, his view - that the Herero should be recruited as labourers instead of being exterminated - won sufficient adherents to bring about the arrest of the remainder of the tribe - mostly women and children – along with the members of another tribe, the Nama, and their incarceration in ‘concentration camps’ (the first official German use of this term).

Here, however, their fate was no better. At the worst of the camps, on the rocky terrain of Shark island, off the Namibian coast, the prisoners were used as forced labourers, fed on minimal rations, exposed to bitter winds without adequate clothing, and beaten with leather whips if they failed to work hard enough. Every day, bodies were taken to the beach and left for the tide to wash out into the shark-infested waters. Even the South African press complained about the ‘horrible cruelty’ of the camp regime. The camps also became the sites of scientific investigation, as the anthropologist Eugen Fischer, later to become a leading ‘racial hygienist’ under the Third Reich, descended on the town of Rehoboth to study its mixed-race inhabitants (whom he called, unflatteringly, the ‘Reheboth Bastards’). He obtained skulls from Shark Island for craniometrical measurements of different racial groups; up to 3,000 of these human remains eventually found their way back to Germany.

Fischer concluded that mixed-race offspring of Boers or German settlers and black Africans were inferior to the former but superior to the latter, and thought they were suitable for recruitment as a kind of non-commissioned officer class in the police, postal service or other arms of the state. As a useful if inferior race, they should be protected, unlike the Herero and the Nama. However, the law in German South-west Africa followed Trotha’s belief that Africans were sub-humans and his almost pathological fear that racial mixing would spread disease. In 1905 ‘racial mixing’ was banned, and in 1909 interracial marriage and cohabitation were made punishable by loss of civil rights. These measures introduced the term *Rassenschande*, ‘racial defilement’, into German legal terminology; it was to resurface thirty years later, in the Third Reich’s Nuremberg Laws. A different legal status was ascribed to the German settlers and the rest of the population, allowing Herero men to be conscripted for forced labour and compelling them to wear identification tags (another measure later applied by the Nazis to the Jews). The Herero population, estimated at 85,000 before the war, was reduced to 15,000 by the end, while up to 10,000 out of a total of 20,000 Nama were exterminated. Of some 17,000 Africans incarcerated in the concentration camps, only half survived. Given Trotha’s racial beliefs, there can be no doubt that this was what would later come to be called a genocide.

Quite apart from this genocidal war, violence was a constant feature of German rule in many different colonies. In German East Africa, for instance, continual military clashes, many of them set off by the unscrupulous colonial adventurer Carl Peters, drew the imperial government in Berlin to take over the colony’s administration in 1891; but armed conflict continued, with no fewer than sixty-one major ‘penal expeditions’ launched in the following six years. In 1905 conflicts over land seizures, taxation rises and forced labour requirements led to the Maji-Maji uprising, in which some 80,000 Africans died at the hands of the German military. Although, in contrast to the situation in South-west Africa, this was not seen as a racial war by the Germans, and indeed many of the casualties were inflicted by African troops in German uniform, so-called *Askaris*,the devastation was immense, with more than 200,000 Africans perishing from the famine caused by the destruction of rebel fields and villages by the Germans.

Still, everyday violence including public beatings of Africans was a fixed part of everyday life in the German colonies.German colonial postcards portrayed peaceful scenes in which Africans put up admiring portraits of Bismarck and squatted deferentially around the German flag, but force was never far away, soldiers were posted to guard the flag from insult or attack, and even the officially recorded number of formally ordered public beatings of Africans, certainly an underestimate, rose in Cameroon for example from 315 in 1900 to 4,800 in 1913. African rulers in Cameroon took their case to the German Reichstag, but the governor’s subsequent dismissal had more to do with the objections of traders and missionaries to his policy of granting big land concessions to the planters than with the brutality of his rule. The situation reached a crisis point at the end of German rule, when a former paramount chief in Cameroon was publicly executed for objecting to racial segregation measures in the main town, Duala; his funeral attracted large crowds and became itself a demonstration of resistance.

Such acts reflected not least the continuing fragility of German control. Experiences and techniques of rule obviously differed between colonies of settlement, where large numbers of Europeans emigrated to establish themselves in a climate and under conditions favourable to a European style of life, and what have been called colonies of occupation, where the climate and the terrain were only suitable for low-levels of emigration and settlement; a contrast in the German case might be between for example South-west Africa, which attracted relatively large numbers of settler ranchers, and Cameroon, where disease and the density of the rainforest limited settlers to a few hundred. The relative strength, degree of organization, and military preparedness of indigenous societies also played a role; loosely organized nomadic herdsmen like the Herero were in the end easier to defeat than settled and elaborately structured political systems like those of the Islamic states that stretched across northern Cameroon and over into British colonies like Nigeria.

In German East Africa, for example, 415 colonial officers and administrators were supposedly controlling nearly ten million Africans and Arab traders. German banknotes were printed but were only really used in Dar-es-Salaam. There were only 30 German military stations across the colony, and they depended for their effectiveness on the co-operation of local African leaders. They could, of course, choose whom to co-operate with; during his 20-year term of office in Togo, for example, one regional official dismissed all 544 chiefs in his district and replaced them with others; but co-operate they had to. In northern Cameroon the Islamic Fulbe aristocracy, once they had been brought under German control by a series of military expeditions, actually used German military forces to extend their own area of influence, so that a co-rule between the two was the result.

So, given their small numbers in comparison to those of the Africans, the Germans could only hope to establish ‘islands of power’ in their colonies. German propaganda portrayed happy colonies where Africans tried to imitate European ways, or reverted to their own primitive customs and beliefs, but there was never any doubt about the Germans’ belief that they were inferior beings, and they knew it. Nowhere did Africans wholly accept the legitimacy of German sovereignty. Their effective exclusion from participation in the political life and public sphere of the colonies doomed German rule to appear always as alien rule. And the same was the case in other German colonies too, even in the treaty port of Jiaozhou, with its modern facilities and education for the Chinese.

How did this compare with other colonial powers? Did they too use symbolic violence to conceal their inability to establish full control? Did they commit massascres in order to impose their will on the colonized? The largest of the European empires, the British, was so large and diverse that generalization is difficult. In addition, the British empire was always run on very decentralized lines. Westminster law was supreme, but there was no attempt to impose a uniform system of rule from London, and there were even different agencies in London responsible for various parts of the empire – notably the Foreign Office (for protectorates), the Colonial Office (to which protectorates were eventually transferred), and the India Office. Before the First World War, the Colonial Office was run by politicians with little knowledge of the colonies, which gave considerable power to senior civil servants, who were too busy to involve themselves in the minutiae of administrative affairs in the separate colonies. The insistence on free trade across the empire made central control even less necessary. Huge power therefore devolved onto the colonial state on the ground.

Major parts of the empire had been in British possession long before the Scramble for Africa. These included first of all colonies of settlement, notably Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and to a degree South Africa. While there was European settlement on some scale in some non-British colonies, notably Algeria and to some extent Southwest Africa, these British colonies were unique in being almost purely designed as goals for emigration. Millions left Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales for new homes overseas, especially in times of economic hardship like the ‘hungry forties’. The government gave little help, except briefly in the 1820s, and its major contribution was the founding of a distinctive kind of settler society in Australia, through the transportation of more than 130,000 convicts up to1868.

Many emigrants went of course to the USA but in Australia, New Zealand and Canada private settlement companies encouraged emigration from the British Isles and smoothed the way for migrants by colonizing land and selling it cheaply to them. The main proponent of this idea was Edward Gibbon Wakefield, who founded a number of colonizing companies, notably in New Zealand. With his followers he persuaded the British government that these colonies could support themselves economically and were creating a new British society abroad, in areas suitable for British exports. As these societies took shape and contour, the system of representative, colonial self-government familiar from 18th-century America was extended to them as well. The move was prompted by a report issued by Lord Durham in 1839 following armed uprisings in Canada two years before These were caused by the resentments of a French minority that considered itself disfranchised, and the hostility shown to the royal authority of the governor by large numbers of recent immigrants from America. 12 rebels were hanged, 1700 were arrested, and hundreds fled to the USA. Durham’s recommendation of colonial self-government, with colonial parliaments and ministries, became the basis for British imperial administration of colonies with a majority of European and especially British settlers. This disqualified colonies where settlers were in a minority, like the West Indies and India, but by the late 19th century self-administration had been extended not only to Canada and Australia, but also to New Zealand and the Cape Colony in South Africa, where the British government did not want to bear the cost of wars against respectively the Maori and the Zulus. Voting rights of course were confined to the white minority.

To what extent was violence involved in the establishment of the settler colonies? To a large extent in Canada, as in the Americas, the settlers’ work was done for them by disease. When Scottish settlers led by Lord Selkirk arrived at Assinibois in Manitoba in 1816, they were confronted by local ‘Indians’ who feared the inroads the settlers might make into their fur trading and killed the governor and 22 Europeans in the so-called Battle of Seven Oaks, forcing them to withdraw. Selkirk returned in 1817 with a group of fully-armed ex-soldiers as settlers, who succeeded in re-establishing the colony. Their success was due not just to their preparedness but also to their introduction, no doubt involuntary, of smallpox. A German traveler in the area in the 1830s recorded it as ‘covered with unburied corpses’; the local ‘Indians’, 9,000 strong, had spread ‘pestilence and famine’ and were ‘nearly exterminated’, he noted: ‘They, as well as the Crows and the Blackfeet, endeavoured to flee in all directions, but the diseased everywhere pursued them.’

As in the German colonies, so too in British settler colonies, there was constant low-level, small-scale but often deadly violence, meted out, however, more often by settlers than by colonial troops. As settlers fenced off land, claiming Australia as a vacant possession, nomadic Aborigines began to retaliate for the loss of their traditional areas of hunting and gathering food. Aboriginal attacks on sheep stations in the Bathurst area and the Hunter Valley, west of Sydney, in 1824 led the governor of New South Wales, General Sir Thomas Brisbane, to impose martial law, allowing ranchers to shoot Aborigines on sight, and sent out a squad of 24 mounted police to wreak revenge. A critical missionary, Lancelot Threlkeld, reported that ‘a large number were driven into a swamp, and mounted police rode round and round and shot them off indiscriminately until they were all… destroyed, men, women and children!’ The squad collected 45 skulls from the corpses, boiled them down, and had them taken back to England by their commanding officer as trophies. ‘The best thing that could be done’, Threlkeld reported a local rancher as saying, ‘would be to shoot all the Blacks and manure the ground with their carcasses, which was all the good they were fit for…the women and children should especially be shot as the most certain method of getting rid of the race.’

One of the relatively few occasions on which concerted government action was taken against Aborigines was in Tasmania. Initially the governor attempted to show the Aborigines that they would receive equal justice to the settlers. But clashes continued, until in 1830 Governor George Arthur gathered 3,000 Europeans, including a thousand soldiers and 700 convicts on parole, paid for by the British treasury, to form a ‘Black Line’ across the country to drive the Aborigines south on to the Tasman Peninsula south of Hobart. By this time the original population of 7,000 in 1800 had been reduced to a few hundred by sporadic private violence and above all by disease. This remainder, Arthur claimed, would ‘murder every white inhabitant, if they could do so with safety to themselves’. This was very much an initiative of the island’s settlers and the local administration. The Colonial Secretary General Sir George Murray refused to send out troops to help in the enterprise, commenting that ‘the extinction of the native race’ would leave ‘an indelible stain on the character of the British government’. Except for one small group of five Aborigines who were caught asleep and shot, however, the Line failed to find any natives; they had all slipped through it under cover of the dense bush. Yet by 1834 the remaining 200, told they would be given their lands back and reunited with their families, surrendered [seen here in a somewhat idealized painting from 1840 by Benjamin Duterrau] The promises were lies; they were transported instead to Flinders Island,where so many died that the remaining 47 were taken back to Oyster Cove inTasmania; the last surviving Aborigine died in 1905, and the Aboriginal language along with her.

Massacres of Aborigines were part of the disorderly early history of modern Australia. Frequently they were carried out by freed convicts. The state was keen to impose order, and indeed after the notorious massacre of 30 Aborigines by a gang of former convicts at Myall Creek in 1838,seven of the ex-convict perpetrators were convicted and hanged, though ‘they all stated that they thought it extremely hard that white men should be put to death for killing blacks’. The massacre noted the government of New South Wales to reject the idea that it should ‘abandon all control over these distant regions – and leave the occupiers of them unrestrained in their lawless aggressions upon each other and upon the Aborigines’, and to create a Border Police Force, whose aim, however, was not least to protect ranchers against Aborigine attacks. Small-scale, often individual killings continued, but government control was more or less established by mid-century. The main damage to the indigenous population was done by disease. From an estimated population of between half and three-quarters of a million in 1788, the Aboriginal population declined to 72,000 in 1921. It has only slowly recovered since then.

Where the British confronted not nomadic hunter-gatherers in a sparsely populated country, but settled farmers on rich agricultural land, as in South Africa, the situation was more complex. In the Cape Colony, Boer farmers of Dutch descent bitterly resented the abolition of slavery by the British government in 1834 and the small compensation paid to them for the loss of their slaves. Xhosa land to the east of the colony was impounded by the governor to distribute to former slaves, and on 21 December 1834 a Xhosa army invaded and claimed it back, killing British and Boer settlers as well. Governor D’Urban declared that the Xhosa had to be ‘exterminated’, an emotive word that earned him considerable criticisms in Britain. Another British officer spoke of the ‘necessity…of exterminating, from off the face of the earth, a race of monsters’. The Xhosa chief was shot and his ears removed by soldiers as trophies. But Xhosa resistance was fierce and after several months a compromise was reached, brokered by a new liberal government in London appalled by D’Urban’s actions and terrified of the massice cost of continuous warfare in the Cape. The British withdrew and left the Xhosa with their land.

Appalled by this retreat, 5,000 Boer farmers expressed their lack of confidence in the British Empire by migrating northwards between 1835 and 1837 in what became known as the ‘Great Trek’. Violent clashes with the Zulus and Ndebele ensued, with for example 135 trekkers reportedly shooting a small army of 9,000 Ndebele warriors in 1837; the Ndebele migrated northwards as a consequence. In 1838 Zulus killed Dutch settlers who had moved onto their land and threatened British settlements as well; in December the Boers retaliated by slaughtering 3000 Zulu warriors at the Battle of Blood River, which was made a South African public holiday in the 1920s. The prospect of a turbulent and independent Boer province on the borders of the Cape was too much for the British authorities, and by 1843 the new Boer province of Natal had been incorporated into the Empire. As British plantations were founded, clashes between the British and Boers on the one hand, and the Zulus on the other, intensified, culminating in the British decision to annex Zululand in 1879. At the battle of Isandlwana the British invading force was heavily defeated, and though an outpost at Rorke’s Drift held off another Zulu force, the army had to retreat, suffering further losses. A second, stronger invasion force finally defeated the Zulus and established British control, breaking up the Zulu kingdom.

A decade earlier, in 1869, diamonds had been discovered at Kimberley, then in 1886 an Australian prospector discovered gold on the Witwatersrand. Within a few years hundreds of thousands of immigrants had arrived, creating the wild boom-town of Johannesburg. Already in 1881 a Boer force defeated the British at the Battle of Majuba Hill and re-established the independence of the Boer republic of the Transvaal, annexed by the British five years before. The republic was made rich by the gold mines, but the wealth went to international businessmen and the magnates known locally as the Randlords, not to the mass of impoverished Boer farmers. By the 1890s the huge wealth of the gold and diamond mines was proving irresistible to the British, and when the Boers rejected a demand for voting rights to be extended to the non-Boer white inhabitants of the Transvaal in 1899, the British invaded. An early Boer counter-offensive against Natal and the Cape was defeated by British troops under Lord Roberts which relieved besieged towns such as Mafeking and in 1900 occupied the main Boer towns including the capital, Pretoria.

For another two years the Boers continued the war in a series of guerilla campaigns, leading the new British commander Lord Kitchener systematically to destroy Boer farms and set up 45 concentration camps for Boers, mainly women and children, along lines simultaneously used by US forces in the Philippene-American War and Spanish forces in Cuba in the 1870s. 25,000 Boer soldiers were deported overseas as prisoners of war. Both sides used large numbers of black soldiers, and the British set up 64 concentration camps for black families as well. 28,000 Boers, mainly children, died of disease, exposure and malnutrition, in the tented camps, a death rate of around one in four; of the 107,000 black Africans in the camps, at least 14,000 are known to have died and probably many more. Denied basic medical facilities, and chaotically and inefficiently run, the camps were death-traps. The intent behind them was military rather than genocidal; neither Kitchener nor his officers regarded the Boers in particular as an inferior race worthy only of extermination. Nevertheless, liberal critics such as Lloyd George strongly condemned what he described as a ‘policy of extermination’. The camps left a legacy of bitterness that helped ensure the Boers did not take kindly to subsequent British attempts to make English the only officially permitted language in South Africa.

The British established a federation of colonies and republics in the Union of South Africa in 1909, along similar lines to the federation of states set up in Australia; like Australia, New Zealand and Canada, South Africa became a self-governing Dominion. Neither black Africans nor immigrant Indian workers had equal rights. Already restricted, in 1905 the voting rights of black Africans were abolished altogether, and they were restricted to reserves, which they needed an official pass to leave. Indians, denied the vote since the early 1890s, also had to carry a pass. In 1913 black Africans outside the Cape were restricted to owning land within their so-called original tribal homes, amounting to 7 per cent of the Union’s land. The legal basis for the policy of *apartheid* or ‘separate development’ after 1945 was thus already laid before 1914.

In a sense, the Boer War represented the final phase of the Scramble for Africa. The major territories acquired by the British Empire in the Scramble were very different. They did not have any formal self-government, legislative assemblies or voting rights. They were not colonies of settlement; by and large there were few white settlers in them, though some British possessions in East Africa had a significant number of them. Palm-oil, hardwood, ivory, cocoa, ground-nut and cotton production began to make the new West African colonies economically important, while East African colonies from Egypt southwards were mainly of significance in protecting the route to India through the Suez Canal. Apart from a small number of states like Zanzibar, Brunei, Tonga, Malaya or most importantly Egypt, they did not retain indigenous rulers but were directly controlled from the Colonial Office. Land seizures by colonists were of limited importance given their limited numbers in areas sometimes called ‘the white man’s grave’.

As the British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury said in 1897 in a speech on British colonization in tropical Africa: ‘The objects we have in our view are strictly business objects…We wish that trade should pursue its unchecked and unhindered course upon the Niger, the Nile, and the Zambesi.’ Like Bismarck, Salisbury, along with other British Prime Ministers of the age, wanted colonization to be carried out by chartered companies rather than the state. It was, for example, the Royal Niger Company that led the way in colonizing what later became known as Nigeria, signing 237 separate treaties with local rulers between December 1884 and October 1886 alone. The chiefs made over their land and legal authority to the company in return for being allowed to mine and farm and maintain their own laws.’ The Company for its part declared that it had no ‘desire to interfere more than is absolutely necessary with the internal arrangements of the Chiefs of Central Africa’.

Yet these arrangements proved no more permanent in the British than they had been in the German case. Joseph Chamberlain, who became Colonial Secretary in 1895, was a far more thoroughgoing imperialist than his Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury. He was not satisfied with the loose, treaty-based arrangements by which the new African parts of the empire were ruled. British interests had to be asserted more powerfully. In West Africa the Ashanti fought a long series of wars against the encroachments of the British that only ended in the mid-1890s with the British occupation of the Ashanti capital. Already in 1897 a British force sacked Benin and looted thousands of artifacts following the killing of an embassy sent to open up trade. The powerful and still slaveowning Muslim emirs of northern Nigeria needed bringing to heel, in his view, and in 1900 a West African Frontier Force was created that waged a series of military campaigns against them until they gave in to British demands. The previous year a Royal Navy force bombarded and machine-gunned the port at Zanzibar, killing or wounding 500 people, to express British disapproval of the fact that the sultan’s nephew had declared himself ruler on his uncle’s death without first seeking the permission of the British consul. In 1898 the Battle of Omdurman asserted British control over the Sudan, in what has been called the most one-sided military encounter in history. As Hilaire Belloc put it: ‘Whatever happens, we have got/the Maxim gun, and they have not.’ A book published in London in 1896 declared that when fighting against savages, ‘mere victory is not enough, The enemy must not only be beaten. He must be beaten thoroughly…What is wanted is a big casualty list.’

Violence therefore lay at the heart of the British as well as the German empire. Yet in neither case could it be aimed at establishing total control over the colonies. This was not only too difficult, it was also too expensive. Where indigenous political structures existed, as in northern Nigeria or northern Cameroon, or indeed in Zanzibar, co-operation was necessary; it was to be on terms dictated by the colonizing power, and if those terms were violated, ‘punitive expeditions’ as they were called would be mounted to enforce them. Still in everyday matters chiefs, regarded by the British and Germans in Africa increasingly as paid colonial officials, ran their own affairs and kept their own laws and traditions. The colonizers could only establish ‘islands of power’. In many instances violence was initiated on the ground, without reference to London or Berlin. Colonists in particular were ruthless in asserting what they thought of as their rights to land and their interests over those of indigenous peoples; the colonizing state found itself caught between a perceived need to protect them, and disapproval of their frequent excesses. A racist belief in European superiority underpinned the imperial enterprise in both Britain and Germany, and in their colonies, and had explicit legal consequences in areas of European settlement like South and South-west Africa. Economic interests, whether of trade or plantations or settler farms, were paramount. The German empire does seem to have been more systematically racist than the British, and to have been more prepared to engage in ruthless campaigns of racial warfare and extermination, but in some ways the Herero war in South-west Africa was an exception, and the differences were of degree rather than of kind.

Yet the British Empire of course was a lot older than the German, it encompassed many more varied parts of the globe, and it also lasted a lot longer. Some of the colonies had been in British hands for over a century by the time of the Scramble for Africa, and by far the most important of these was India. I’ll turn to it in my next lecture, when I will also look at the Belgian, Dutch, French and Russian empires by way of comparison. The history of empire is not just the history of European control over other parts of the world; it’s also the history of economic exploitation, and in the fifth lecture of this series, I’ll argue that economic exploitation eventually led, along with other influences, above all after the First World War, to European powers beginning to see the advantages of encouraging economic development and modernization in their overseas colonies. As part of this mission, the ‘white man’s burden’became a burden not of conquest and control but of education and improvement. Colonial violence could not continue indefinitely, and was arousing increasing criticism in Europe itself even before the First World War. What the consequences were, I shall explore on the penultimate day of February, which this year is the 28th.

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