

New countries of 1870 and desire for Empire

Enquiry: Did tensions over Africa make a European war more likely?



New countries

By 1871 the map of Europe had dramatically changed. Two large new countries had been created after short wars. These countries were Germany and Italy. The creation of these two large countries in the middle of Europe changed the the **balance of power** between the major European countries. Beforehand, Britain, France, Russia and the Austrian Empire had been seen as the **great powers**. But Austria and France had both lost lands to the new countries of Italy and Germany. Germany was also **industrialising** so quickly that it looked likely to become wealthier than Russia and Britain.

There had always been rivalry and competition between Europe's powerful nations, but after 1871 this rivalry increased. The new countries of Italy and Germany wanted to prove themselves and be treated like great powers. The older countries were worried that the new countries might threaten their power. Despite this rivalry, the European countries were keen to avoid war so they didn't directly challenge each other's territory in Europe. Surprisingly, one of the main ways Europeans started competing with each after 1871 was to build empires outside of Europe.



Expanding empires

In the late nineteenth century European **colonisation** increased. There were some general reasons why Europeans started to grow empires but also some reasons why governments of individual European countries wanted to increase the number of colonies they held.

Germany and Italy: wanted to prove themselves to be great powers. They could not increase their borders in Europe without causing a major war. But they believed by getting colonies around the world they would be seen as a great power.

France: was humiliated by being defeated by Germany in 1871 and having to give them land. The French wanted to expand their empire to prove they were still a great power.

Britain: had a large overseas empire before 1870. But as other Europeans tried to grow their empires, Britain wanted to protect the colonies it already controlled and prevent other countries having a larger empire.

Belgium: Belgium was a small and newly-independent country. By building a large empire, Belgium hoped it would be considered as a great power.



Economic factors

There were also general reasons why Europeans started wanting to control colonies in other parts of the world. One of these reasons was connected to the economic situation in Europe. During the nineteenth century, Europe had experienced an **Industrial Revolution**. This involved factories hugely increasing the amount they produced. As a result, European countries started to need more **raw materials** which the factories would make into goods that could be sold. The Europeans also needed new markets where these goods could be sold.

In Africa, explorers found raw materials that couldn't be grown in Europe such as rubber. Europeans also identified potential markets for selling their goods. The desire to expand this trade to Africa became stronger between 1873 and 1896. During this time, Europe experienced a period of **economic depression**. Factories were making less money and people were losing jobs. European Governments thought that gaining colonies in Africa might solve this problem. New markets could be discovered, which would provide places for European factories to sell their goods.



Cultural factors

Another reason why Europeans wanted to expand into Africa was because of racist ideas of white superiority. Across Europe, the idea that Europeans were racially and culturally superior to Africans made people believe that it was their mission to **'civilise'** Africa. For example, famous Scottish **missionary** explorer David Livingstone said that it was the European duty to introduce the Africans to the 'three Cs' – **commerce**, Christianity and civilisation.

In reality, many people involved in expanding empire used the argument that they planned to 'civilise' Africa in order to justify their self-interest. A British soldier, Lord Lugard (who later became the governor of Nigeria) said that Britain's major motive in their expansion in Africa was to 'serve our own interest as a nation.' By saying this, he was suggesting that European needs for trade were more important than the needs of the Africans whose land they were colonising.



Glossary

Balance of power: The relationship between different countries, based on who are the most powerful.

Great powers: Countries which had the most land, power, and influence

Industrialising: Developing economically by producing more technology and goods

Colonisation: When one country takes over another country

Industrial revolution: A period of economic development c.1750-1900, where lots of new inventions meant lots of new goods were produced

Raw materials: Materials from which products are made. Eg. cotton

Economic depression: A period of economic difficulty, usually characterised by low wages, high unemployment and difficulty in trading

Civilise: To make more socially advanced

Missionary: People who go on a mission to spread their religion to another country

Commerce: Trade



Comprehension questions:

1. Which two new European countries were created in 1870/1871?
2. Why did the older European countries worry about the creation of new European countries?
3. Why was France keen to expand its empire?
4. What economic difficulties were European countries facing in between 1873 and 1896?
5. Why didn't Germany and Italy expand their borders within Europe?
6. What were the 'three Cs'?

Challenge: How were David Livingstone and Lord Lugard's reasons for colonising Africa different?

Sentence starter:

Livingstone and Lugard's explanations for why they wanted to colonise Africa are different because.. Livingstone said... Whereas Lugard said...



Extension Question

How did European powers justify their desire for expanding their Empires in Africa?

Use the sentence starters and key words below to answer this question

Sentence starters:	Key words
<p><i>The European powers justified their desire for expanding their Empires by saying...</i></p> <p><i>An example of this was...</i></p> <p><i>It was likely that they said this because...</i></p>	<p>Three Cs</p> <p>Civilising</p> <p>White superiority</p> <p>David Livingstone</p>

