

# European Empire Building in Asia and Africa

During the late nineteenth century, several European countries wanted more overseas land. These countries were Great Britain, France, Portugal, Spain, Denmark, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. The result was a “**Scramble for Africa**” between 1885 and 1910. During this period, several European countries divided the continent of Africa among themselves.

Economic development played a large role in the colonization of Africa. During the nineteenth century, factories in Europe require raw materials to manufacture finished products. The Europeans looked for new sources of raw materials and markets for their goods. Gold, diamonds, and oil were some of the resources the Europeans wanted. Asia and Africa had those resources.

Politics also led to the colonization of Africa. Some European nations showed national pride by competing for colonies in Africa. No major nation—including Great Britain, France, & Germany—wanted to be without colonies. Colonies in Africa and Asia made the Europeans feel pride in their country.

Another reason for colonizing was the European worldview. Many 19<sup>th</sup> century Europeans viewed themselves as the world’s most advanced civilization. Some felt it necessary to “civilize” people in the rest of the world. Increased activity by African missionaries helped make colonization seem less offensive to citizens in Europe. This scramble for land also reached farther into Asia. Many Asian territories saw a change from Europe as trading partner to Europe as conqueror. Great Britain, for instance, took control of India. France controlled lands in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam. The British fought for control of other lands like Burma, Laos, Siam, and Cambodia.

**Nationalism** (the love of one’s country) and **militarism** (using strong armies and threats of war) were on the rise in Europe. European countries signed treaties agreeing to help one another in case of attack. In 1914, a series of events caused Germany to declare war on Russia and France. On the other side, the British joined France and Russia and formed the **Allied Powers**. Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire (Turkey and its colonies), and Bulgaria joined the Germans as the **Central Powers**.

Because these countries were large and controlled lands around the world, the war was called the **Great War**. Later, the United States became involved on the side of the Allied Powers. The war lasted until 1918, and an estimated 10 million people died. Some believed it was “the war to end all wars.” Unfortunately, just 20 years later, Europe would be at the center of an even bigger conflict. The Great War became known as **World War I**. The later, larger conflict was called **World War II**.

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## Questions to Consider:

- Which statement best describes how economics played a role in European colonies in the nineteenth century?
  - The desire for international tourism increased.
  - Europe felt Asia’s growing population was a threat to expansion.
  - Trade routes to Asia from Europe were less important than before.
  - Europe wanted more sources of raw materials needed for manufacturing.
- How did nationalism play a part in Europe’s competition to colonize Africa and Asia?
  - European missionaries were trying to spread their religion.
  - Europeans felt a need to “civilize” other parts of the world.
  - Smaller countries wanted more land to accommodate growing populations.
  - Having colonies made countries feel more important and successful than other countries.
- What war was a result of militarism and nationalism in the late nineteenth century?
- Which group of nations (3) formed the Central Powers?
- What is your opinion on the “Scramble for Africa”? Was it fair for European nations to takeover land & people in Africa and force them to become colonies of Europe? Please write at least 3 sentences to support your answer.

