

Unit 2

AFRICA & THE COLONIAL EXPERIENCE (1880S -1960S)

Introduction:

This unit explores the partition of Africa and the early resistance movements against colonial rule. It helps students understand the consequences of colonialism and the reactions of Africans to foreign domination. The major lessons include the background of colonialism, European motives for colonization, the scramble for Africa, the Berlin Conference, colonial policies and administration, early African resistance, and the impacts of colonial rule on Africa.

Key Concepts

1. Colonialism:

Colonialism is the direct control and dominance of one country by another, where the foreign power takes full authority over the state. It often involves the exploitation of the subjugated country's resources and people. Colonialism is closely linked to imperialism, which is the policy of extending a country's power through diplomacy or military force.

2. Scramble for Africa:

The scramble for Africa refers to the rapid colonization of the African continent by European powers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Before the 1880s, only about 10% of Africa was under foreign control, primarily coastal regions. However, the growing competition among European powers for resources and territories led to a fierce rush to claim African lands, marking the beginning of extensive colonization.

3. Berlin Conference (1884-1885):

The Berlin Conference was organized by German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and involved 14 European countries. The conference aimed to regulate European colonization and trade in Africa, leading to the partition of the continent without any African representation. The "General Act of the Conference" established guidelines for the colonization process, including the principle of effective occupation, which required colonial powers to establish control and administration over the territories they claimed.

Colonial Policies

1. Direct Rule:

In the direct rule system, European powers such as the French, Belgians, and Portuguese replaced local African leaders with European officials. This system involved strict control by the colonial power, with the goal of assimilating African societies into European culture and governance.

2. Indirect Rule:

Indirect rule, practiced by the British, involved governing through existing African leaders. This system was considered cheaper and more effective, as it reduced African resistance by involving local rulers in the administration. However, it also deepened ethnic divisions by emphasizing differences in culture, language, and religion.

3. Settler Rule:

In settler colonies, European settlers took over large areas of fertile land, often displacing indigenous Africans. This system was particularly harsh and racist, leading to significant social and economic inequalities. Settler rule was common in regions such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Kenya, where Africans were often reduced to landless laborers.

Causes of European Colonization

1. Economic:

The demand for raw materials and new markets was a driving force behind European colonization. The Industrial Revolution increased the need for resources like minerals, agricultural products, and labor, leading European powers to exploit Africa's abundant resources.

2. Political/Strategic:

European nations were competing for global dominance, and controlling strategic territories in Africa was seen as a way to enhance their power and prestige. Establishing military and naval bases in these territories was also a key objective.

3. Civilizing Mission and the White Man's Burden:

Many Europeans believed they had a moral duty to "civilize" African societies by spreading Western culture, religion, and governance. This belief was encapsulated in the concept of the "White Man's Burden," which justified colonization as a benevolent mission.

4. Religious Factor:

Christian missionaries supported colonization, believing that European rule would

create a stable environment for their activities. However, despite their efforts, missionaries had limited success in converting Africans to Christianity.

Early African Resistance Movements Against Colonialism

Introduction

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Africa faced extensive colonial conquest by European powers. African responses to colonialism varied widely, ranging from armed resistance to nonviolent protests. These efforts were critical in shaping the course of African history, leading eventually to the decolonization of the continent.

1. Stages of African Resistance

- **First Stage (1880-1914):** The initial resistance against European invasion and colonization occurred during this period. Various African leaders and communities took up arms or used diplomacy to resist European encroachment.
- **Second Stage (1914-1945):** Resistance continued as African communities adjusted to the reality of colonial rule, employing both armed and nonviolent methods.
- **Third Stage (1950s-1980s):** Marked by the emergence of national liberation movements, this period led to the decolonization of Africa, with many countries gaining independence.

2. Examples of Early Resistance Movements

2.1 Resistance in West Africa

- **Ahmadu Seku:**
 - **Who?** Ahmadu Seku was a leader of the Tukolor Empire in West Africa.
 - **What?** He resisted French colonial expansion from the 1830s to 1845, initially preferring diplomacy. However, when the French violated agreements and began expanding their territory, Ahmadu's forces engaged in armed conflict.
 - **Outcome:** Despite his efforts, Ahmadu was defeated, exiled to Sokoto, and his empire disintegrated. The French then allied with Ahmadu's brother to consolidate control over the region.
- **Samori Ture:**
 - **Who?** A Muslim leader of the Mandinka Empire, Samori Ture, fiercely resisted French colonization from 1882 to 1898.
 - **What?** He unified vast regions of present-day Guinea, Mali, and Côte d'Ivoire, leading an army of 30,000 men in prolonged resistance against the French.
 - **Outcome:** Samori was eventually captured by the French in 1900 and exiled to Gabon.
- **The Asante:**

- **Who?** The Asante kingdom in present-day Ghana, led by Asantehene (King) Prempe, resisted British colonial expansion.
- **What?** The Asante fought the British, who used divide and rule tactics, superior weapons, and African recruits to establish control.
- **Outcome:** The British defeated the Asante in 1900 and established the colony of the Gold Coast, encompassing all of Ghana by 1910.

2.2 Resistance in East Africa

- **The Maji-Maji Uprising:**
 - **Who?** A significant uprising against German colonial rule in Tanganyika (modern-day Tanzania) from 1905 to 1907.
 - **What?** Led by the prophet Kinjikitile Ngwale, the Maji-Maji movement united 20 different ethnic groups against the Germans. Ngwale's followers believed that sacred water (Maji Maji) would protect them from bullets.
 - **Outcome:** Despite the widespread support, the uprising was crushed by the Germans, who used a scorched earth policy, resulting in massive devastation.

2.3 Resistance in South Africa

- **Herero and Nama Uprisings:**
 - **Who?** The Herero people, led by Samuel Maharero, and the Nama people, led by Hendrik Witbooi, rebelled against German colonial rule in South West Africa (modern Namibia).
 - **What?** Both groups fought against harsh German policies, including land alienation and forced labor.
 - **Outcome:** The Germans brutally suppressed both uprisings.

2.4 Resistance in North Africa

- **Urabi Pasha's Revolt:**
 - **Who?** Urabi Pasha led a revolt against British and French control in Egypt in 1881.
 - **What?** The revolt was a reaction to the dual control imposed by Britain and France, which weakened Egypt's sovereignty.
 - **Outcome:** The British forces defeated Urabi's revolt in 1882, leading to the establishment of British colonial control over Egypt.

3. Impacts of Colonialism

- **Political Impacts:**
 - Loss of independence and freedom for African nations.
 - Destruction of indigenous governance systems.
 - Creation of artificial boundaries, leading to post-independence conflicts.

- **Economic Impacts:**
 - Africa became a supplier of raw materials for European industries.
 - Indigenous industries and technologies were neglected.
 - Natural resources were exploited by European powers.
- **Social Impacts:**
 - Disruption of local communities, with forced relocations to create white settlement areas.
 - Introduction of diseases like Rinderpest, affecting livestock and communities.
 - Cultural and social structures were heavily influenced and altered by European powers.

Conclusion

African resistance against colonialism was a complex and varied struggle that laid the groundwork for the eventual decolonization of the continent. While colonialism brought some modern infrastructure and education, its overall impact on Africa was devastating, leading to long-term economic, political, and social challenges.