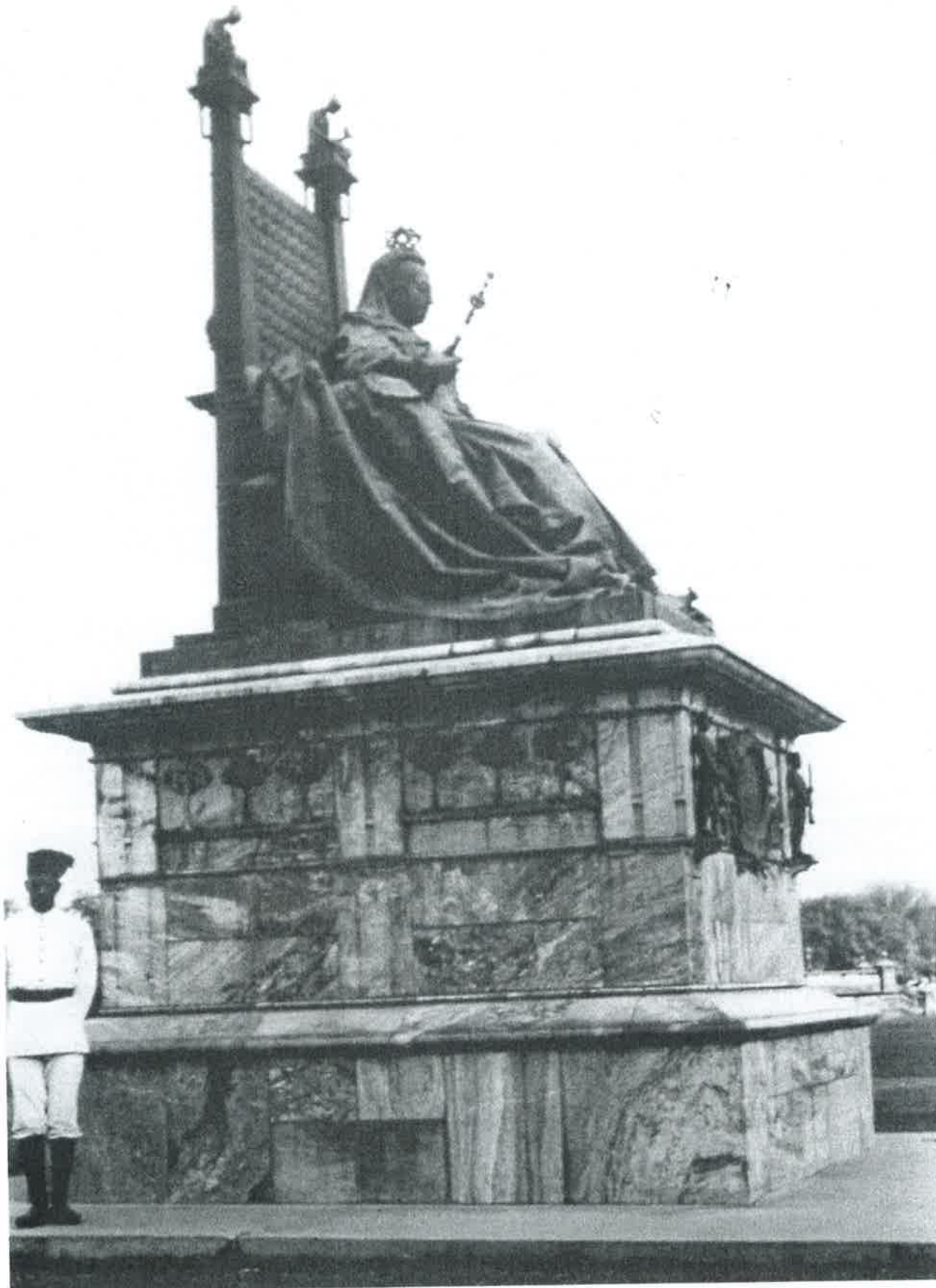


Imperialism Takes Off

A whole host of reasons is commonly given to explain the struggle for full-scale empire that became so heated in the 19th century: national pride, economic competition, the mission to Christianize the world, and continuing cultural curiosity. In general, however, the drive for money and might has received the most attention as the source of the drive for conquest. It motivated small powers like the Netherlands, Belgium, and Portugal as much as more prosperous and larger ones like Britain, France, and Russia to extend their political control internationally. Fledgling powers like Japan and the United States joined in later in the century.

Imperialism often involved domination of southern regions by more northerly powers. Britain was still working to achieve control of India when it took over Egypt, large parts of sub-Saharan Africa, and regions of Asia adjacent to India. Napoleon had excited the French over conquest in North Africa when he invaded Egypt late in the 18th century. In 1830 France started its campaign to conquer Algeria and by mid-century it was also engaged in West Africa and the Far East. Russia was continuing to move east against China and southward, absorbing the Muslim centers of Tashkent, Bukhara, Khiva, Geok-Tepe, and Merv between 1865 and 1884. As the century closed, the United States annexed Hawaii and moved against Spain, first eyeing the remnants of its empire, then defeating it in a war over Cuba and taking the Philippines.

Until recently, imperialism has been seen as a one-way operation in which industrial and military powers subdued savages who lacked economic and political leadership. Linked to that interpretation is the suggestion that imperialists then brought in effective government that allowed them to rule the native peoples fairly easily. Because these people lacked both culture and political institutions, the argument



By erecting monuments such as this one of Queen Empress Victoria in Calcutta the British government filled Indian cities with reminders of its sovereignty. They aimed to inspire awe and loyalty.

went, the imperial powers peacefully filled up an "empty" or "savage" territory, to that territory's benefit.

The truth is quite different. Along with bloodshed, imperialism generally brought chaos, as a result of overlapping systems of control. These systems included the demands of imperial masters and of local and regional rulers such as the chiefs of ethnic groups, nomadic warlords, slavers, and traders—all of whom claimed the right to direct, tax, or make indigenous peoples work for them.

Nor did the European powers or Japan have their own houses in order enough to claim the right to fill a supposed political vacuum. They were plagued by revolution, wars against one another, filth and disease, and constant social upheaval. In fact, for a country like France imperialism provided compensation for its defeat at the hands of Germany in 1871, while Japan saw imperialism late in the 19th century as a way of keeping occupied disgruntled and rebellious warriors who were causing trouble for those wanting the country to modernize through industrialization.

Despite its major impact, the big imperial scramble was not wholeheartedly approved—nor was it even a uniform policy. The military, explorers, entrepreneurs with their own armies, and missionaries often made conquests that their home governments approved only later. Missionaries were particularly effective at pulling in the powers to where they otherwise might not have gone, and even raised money to pay for colonial armies. The debates over imperialism were vociferous. The British muddled their way into an empire, debating all the way, which is not to say they took their colonies bloodlessly. Imperialism's territorial advance also depended on taking advantage of two notoriously weak empires, the Qing in China and the Ottoman that extended through Asia Minor, the Middle East, and North Africa. Most of the documents shown here portray empires resolutely advancing from deliberately dispersed centers of imperial power, but this is not the entire picture. As in the case of China below, protest and resistance increasingly shaped the story too.

British Aggression in Asia and the Middle East

British, French, and U.S. traders, like the Spanish and Portuguese traders before them, made fortunes by trading opium to the Chinese, but in the first half of the 19th century the Chinese government became adamant that this rapidly growing trade stop. In previous centuries the trade had

brought the Chinese income, but now silver flowed out from the country as opium addiction gripped the country's population. But this addiction was not confined to the Chinese alone, for Westerners of all classes used opium, morphine, laudanum, and other opium-based products to dull the pain of headaches or toothaches, to quiet fussy children, or to serve as a source of inspiration to write books and poetry. The Chinese bureaucracy, however, sought to squash the trade by confiscating the opium and prohibiting further trade in it. No less than the future of China, they believed, was at stake.

As the major trader in opium by this time, the British government was committed to expanding free trade in opium products and especially to maintaining the flow of the vast amounts of silver from British commerce in opium produced in its Indian holdings. Instead of withdrawing from the Chinese market, Britain demanded concessions from the Chinese and the opening of even more new ports to the opium trade. The Chinese responded by twice declaring wars, conflicts that the British won after destroying Chinese property and fortifications. As a result of the first Opium War, in 1839–42, the British enforced the Treaty of Nanking, which gave it Hong Kong, guaranteed the opium trade, and opened four more ports to trade. The expanding commitment of the British government to the prosperity of its traders and the increased opportunity in China were crucial factors in the 19th-century growth of new empires built from the decline of others.

The Chinese had their own side of the story: in "The Evil of Opium" (1838) a typical Chinese bureaucrat analyzes the problem as one of inflation in the cost of silver and thus general inflation and declining prosperity.

Your Majesty's selfless and tireless devotion to the affairs of the state is motivated by your sincere desire to safeguard the welfare not only of all the people in China today but also of generations to come. Despite such diligence and earnestness on your part, the treasury does not have enough funds to meet expenses, and the livelihood of our people remains poor and unsatisfactory. Recently this situation has gone from bad to worse, and each year is worse than the year before. . . . As late as the Chia-ch'ing period [1796–1820] the nation was still economically sound, so sound that members of the gentry and wealthy merchants continued to live a life of luxury. What a different situation there is today. . . . Your humble servant has had occasion to notice that lately there



The Chinese government burned opium by the shipload in the 1800s. Concerned about the amount of money draining out of the country to support this expensive habit of some citizens, the government began seizing and destroying the product.

has been a steady increase in the price of silver in terms of standard coins, so great that one tael of silver is now worth more than 1,600 standard coins. The rise of the price of silver has nothing to do with the consumption of silver inside China; it results primarily from the outflow of silver to foreign countries. . . .

At the beginning, opium smoking was confined to the fops of wealthy families who took up the habit as a form of conspicuous consumption; even they knew that they should not indulge in it to the greatest extreme. Later, people of all social strata—from government officials and members of the gentry to craftsmen, merchants, entertainers, and servants, and even women, Buddhist monks and nuns, and Taoist priests—took up the habit and openly bought and equipped themselves with smoking instruments. Even in the center of our dynasty—the nation's capital and its surrounding areas—some of the inhabitants have also been contaminated by this dreadful poison.

The inflow of opium from foreign countries has steadily increased in recent years. . . . Conspiring with sea patrol and coast guards [whom they bribe], unscrupulous merchants at Canton use such small boats as "sneaking dragons" and "fast crabs" to ship silver out and bring opium in. From the third to the eleventh year of Tao-kuang [1823–31] the annual outflow of silver amounted to more than 17 million taels. From the eleventh to the fourteenth year [1831–34] it reached more than 20 million taels, and since the fourteenth year [1834] it has been more than 30 million taels. Large as they are, these figures do not cover the import of opium in other ports such as those in Fukien, Chekiang, Shantung, and Tientsin, which amounts to tens of thousands of taels per year.

Thus we are using the financial resources of China to fill up the bottomless hole in foreign countries.

Hard on the heels of Britain's violent prying open of China in the Opium Wars came the Indian Mutiny, also known as the Sepoy Rebellion, of 1857. This uprising came about when

Indian soldiers, called Sepoys, who had been recruited to conquer and maintain order for the British East India Company revolted. As the British expanded their foreign interests, they and most of the other powers that followed used colonized peoples in their armies and in local bureaucracies. They also hired armies of mercenaries from local princes and thereby cut the costs of running the empire. The hired armies gave the local princes revenues, while the employment of Indians to do some of the colonizers' work created a buffer between the British and the indigenous people.

Over a period of years the British East India Company had ridden roughshod over a number of Indian customs: reformers had tried to stop the burning of widows on their husband's death. The company had attacked the caste system that classified Indians into strictly regulated groups, while missionaries had encouraged Indians' conversion to Christianity. The introduction of a new rifle into the Indian army also became offensive, because soldiers had to bite the end off cartridges that had been greased with a mixture of beef and pork fat. The soldiers rebelled because beef and pork were meats forbidden to Hindus and Muslims respectively. Although this blatant disregard for both sets of religious laws infuriated Indian soldiers, behind the uprising lay the smoldering resentments of princes and members of the middle and upper classes who were becoming increasingly outraged at the East India Company's high-handedness, favoritism, and attacks on important social customs. The widespread rebellion brought violent attacks on British soldiers and civilians alike, but the reprisals on Indians were far worse. Back home, the British government determined to end the rule of the East India Company and take direct control of India. With Queen Victoria's Proclamation to the Princes, Chiefs, and People of India (1858) of British governmental rule, the world entered a crucial stage in modern imperialism, as others joined Britain's drive for direct rule in Asia.

We hereby announce to the native princes of India that all treaties and engagements made with them by or under the authority of the Honourable East India Company are by us accepted, and will be scrupulously maintained, and we look for the like observance on their part.

We desire no extension of our present territorial possessions; and, while we will permit no aggression upon our dominions or

Opium

The opium poppy has been known for its healing properties since ancient times, and indeed 18th- and 19th-century people used it to relieve pain much as we use aspirin or ibuprofen. Unlike modern pain relievers, however, opium is highly addictive and its users often could not stop taking the substance in its many forms. Influenced by Enlightenment ideas of the crucial nature of both reason and the imagination, Europeans came to experiment with the drug in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The scientist Sir Humphry Davy, for instance, recorded his sensations and state of mind while taking opium, and romantic writers tried to infuse their novels and poetry with intense feelings induced by it. The novelist Sir Walter Scott reported writing *Lucia di Lammermoor* under the influence of opium. Meanwhile, the Chinese used opium in public spaces designed for its consumption known as the opium den. Beginning with the Chinese, governments started clamping down on opium for leisure-time activity as well as for pain relief.

Debilitating as a habit, opium use angered the Chinese government not only because of its effect on ordinary people, but because of British coercion that the opium be admitted to China. Opium smoking became a habit among many Chinese, as the East India Company dumped thousands of pounds of the product into the country.



An Indian servant attends Queen Victoria as she reviews official documents. The queen conspicuously employed Indians as her servants in England. She relished her status as ruler of India, and loved the colony's many products, giving Indian shawls and other fancy goods as gifts.



our rights to be attempted with impunity, we shall sanction no encroachment on those of others. We shall respect the rights, dignity, and honour of native princes as our own; and we desire that they, as well as our own subjects, should enjoy that prosperity and that social advancement which can only be secured by internal peace and good government.

We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects, and those obligations, by the blessing of Almighty God, we shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfill.

Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, we disclaim alike the right and the desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects. We declare it to be our royal will and pleasure that none be in any wise favoured, none molested or disquieted, by reason of their religious faith or observances, but that all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law; and we do strictly charge and enjoin all those who may be in authority under us that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects on pain of our highest displeasure.

And it is our further will that, so far as may be, our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability, and integrity duly to discharge.

We know, and respect, the feelings of attachment with which natives of India regard the lands inherited by them from their ancestors, and we desire to protect them in all rights connected therewith, subject to the equitable demands of the State, and we

will that generally, in framing and administering the law, due regard be paid to the ancient rights, usages, and customs of India.

Grounds for Conquest

By British logic, ruling India necessitated ruling the areas that led to it; then one had to control the areas around these routes, making for an endless list of places to conquer. Thus, the takeover of the Egyptian government in the 1880s resulted from the domination of India, which led in turn to a scramble for Africa, and indeed for the rest of the globe. Because the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 speeded passage to India, the British saw Egypt, which controlled canal access, as even more crucial to its own prosperity.

A second reason fortified the British commitment to intervene in Egypt: they wanted to ensure that the Egyptians paid their debts to British financiers and wanted to protect England's investments in railroads, canals, dams, and agricultural enterprises there. Those debts had resulted from the modernizing efforts of Egypt's ruler Muhammad Ali (1805–48) and his successors, who took out loans from European bankers at exorbitant interest rates to gain Western technology and build a European-style army. As pasha, or chief governor, for the Ottoman sultan in Constantinople (now Istanbul), Muhammad Ali was so successful politically that he and his successors made Egypt virtually independent of the Ottoman Empire.

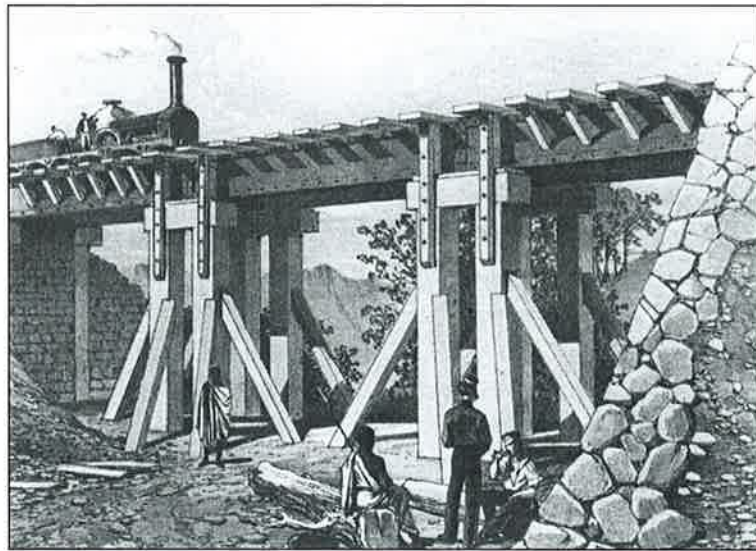
Once the British stepped in, Evelyn Baring, the Earl of Cromer, took charge behind the scenes of the government in Egypt. His justification for why Britain should rule this distant country, taken from his 1908 memoir, has been called *Orientalist*, meaning that it used Western values to create a negative picture of other ethnicities and cultures. Besides the directly political form Orientalism can take, it is often seen to produce exoticism in the arts and in the traveler's view of foreign people. Here Lord Cromer justifies the British conquest using the most negative Orientalist arguments.

Egypt is not the only country which has been brought to the verge of ruin by a persistent neglect of economic laws and by a reckless administration of the finances of the State. Neither is it the only country in whose administration the most elementary principles of law and justice have been ignored. Although the

"It is a source of great satisfaction and pride to her to feel herself in direct communication with that enormous Empire which is so bright a jewel of her Crown, and which she would wish to see happy, contented and peaceful. May the publication of her Proclamation be the beginning of a new era and may it draw a veil over the sad and bloody past."

—Queen Victoria, on the proclamation of Britain's direct rule of India, 1858

Imperialist overseers of projects like railroads, designed to extract the region's resources as efficiently as possible, used local forced labor. Imperialist construction of harbors, roads, and railroads forever changed the landscape of conquered areas.



details may differ, there is a great similarity in the general character of the abuses which spring up under Eastern Governments wheresoever they may be situated. So also, although the remedies to be applied must vary according to local circumstances and according to the character, institutions, and habits of thought of the European nation under whose auspices reforms are initiated, the broad lines which those reforms must take are traced out by the commonplace requirements of European civilisation, and must of necessity present some identity of character, whether the scene of action be India, Algiers, Egypt, Tunis, or Bosnia.

The history of reform in Egypt, therefore, does not present any striking feature to which some analogy might not perhaps be found in other countries where European civilisation has, in a greater or less degree, been grafted on a backward Eastern Government and society. . . .

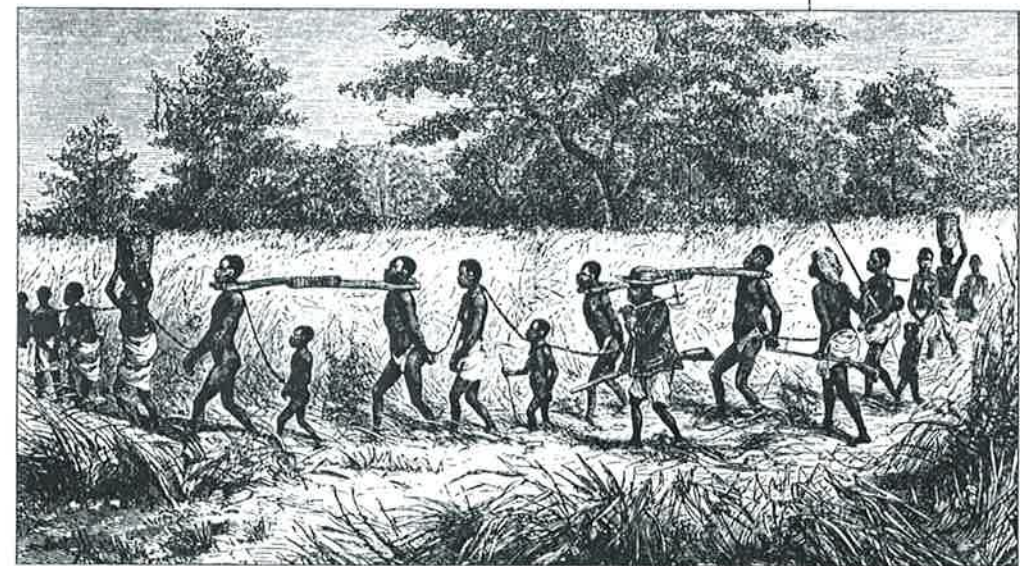
Sir Alfred Lyall [a British official and Orientalist] once said to me: "Accuracy is abhorrent to the Oriental mind. Every Anglo-Indian official should always remember that maxim." Want of accuracy, which easily degenerates into untruthfulness, is, in fact, the main characteristic of the Oriental mind.

The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of ambiguity; he is a natural logician, albeit he may not have studied logic; he loves symmetry in all things; he is by nature skeptical and requires proof before he can accept the truth of any proposition; his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism. The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description. Although the ancient Arabs

acquired in a somewhat high degree the science of dialectics [logic], their descendants are singularly deficient in the logical faculty. They are often incapable of drawing the most obvious conclusions from any simple premises of which they may admit the truth. Endeavor to elicit a plain statement of facts from an ordinary Egyptian. His explanation will generally be lengthy, and wanting in lucidity. He will probably contradict himself half-a-dozen times before he has finished his story. . . .

Or, again, look at the fulsome flattery, which the Oriental will offer to his superior and expect to receive from his inferior, and compare the general approval of such practices with the European frame of mind, which spurns both the flatterer and the person who invites flattery. This contemptible flatter . . . is, indeed, a thorn in the side of the Englishman in Egypt, for it prevents Khedives and Pashas [Egyptian rulers and officials] from hearing the truth from their own countrymen.

Europeans believed in their superiority especially to Africans, whose coastline had been dotted for centuries with European slave-trading centers. Traders from Muslim societies had also drawn slaves from Africa while working successfully to convert many of its ethnic groups. Europeans ended the slave trade in their own societies because Enlightenment thinkers saw slavery as a denial of natural rights. In addition, religious people increasingly came to see slavery as immoral. For others, growing competition among traders made conditions tense.



Although European powers and the United States individually outlawed the slave trade, it continued to be common practice among Africans, Arab traders, and the imperialists themselves. Even in the 20th century Africans were forced into work for Europeans, 100,000 of them being sent as laborers to Europe during World War I. It was called a form of conscription, but the practice was actually enslavement.

Freebooter Imperialists

Imperialists came in many varieties. The zealous late 19th-century German patriot Karl Peters wanted his country to have as great an empire as Britain's. After founding the Society for German Colonization, he gathered enough funds and equipment and a dozen men to accompany him to East Africa in the fall of 1884. There he conducted lavish ceremonials during which chiefs signed "treaties of eternal friendship" and denied any affiliation to the dominant local ruler, the sultan of Zanzibar. In 1885 Peters, a believer in ghosts, numerology, and other mystical doctrines presented these claims to some 55,000 square miles of African territory to German chancellor Otto von Bismarck. They formed the basis of Germany's claim to East Africa.

Even while the official European slave trade declined in the 19th century, the exploitation of Africa and Africans grew. Many exploratory voyages by whites to the interior showed them where to find ivory, rubber, vegetable oils, and precious metals and minerals, most notably gold and then diamonds. After the 1870s the number of explorers mounted, as did clashes and international rivalries for territory in Africa. With their industrial advantage the British had mapped out "spheres of influence" in which their trade would predominate. Then, as other countries developed industrially, they too needed the markets and raw materials the British seemed to control, the more so as a series of booms and busts tested the modernizing societies from 1873 to the turn of the century. The British takeover of Egypt in 1882 was both a threat to the other powers and a sign to take advantage of opportunities in the region. From the 1880s on, the European powers converted a relationship with Africa based on trade to one of empire based on political domination. They often did so by making treaties in which African leaders signed away rights to land and natural resources, allied themselves with the great powers or their agents to fight rivals for control, and agreed to pay the Europeans taxes and tribute.

The situation was so volatile that the powers made treaties and agreements almost daily to set boundaries and resolve other matters. In 1884-85 the great powers met in Berlin to agree upon guidelines for a parceling out of Africa that would minimize the threat of war with one another. In particular the congress established the Congo Free State, a private undertaking of King Leopold II of Belgium, who claimed to want to improve the lives of Africans in setting up this state. Until his rulership over this area was established at the congress, King Leopold had driven the explorer Henry Stanley to exhaustion in pursuit of treaties with African leaders. Run-ins with explorers from rival countries made war a perpetual threat. Thus, the congress set certain provisions for claiming an African region.

General Act of the Berlin West Africa Conference, 1885:

Art. 34: Any Power which henceforth takes possession of a tract of land on the coasts of the African continent outside of its present possessions, or which, being hitherto without such possessions, shall acquire them, as well as the Power which assumes a

Protectorate there, shall accompany the respective act with notification thereof addressed to the other Signatory Powers of the present Act, in order to enable them, if need be, to make good any claims of their own.

Art. 35: The Signatory Powers of the Present Act recognize the obligation to ensure the establishment of authority in regions occupied by them on the coasts of the African Continent sufficient to protect existing rights, and, as the case may be, freedom of trade and of transit under the conditions agreed upon. . . .

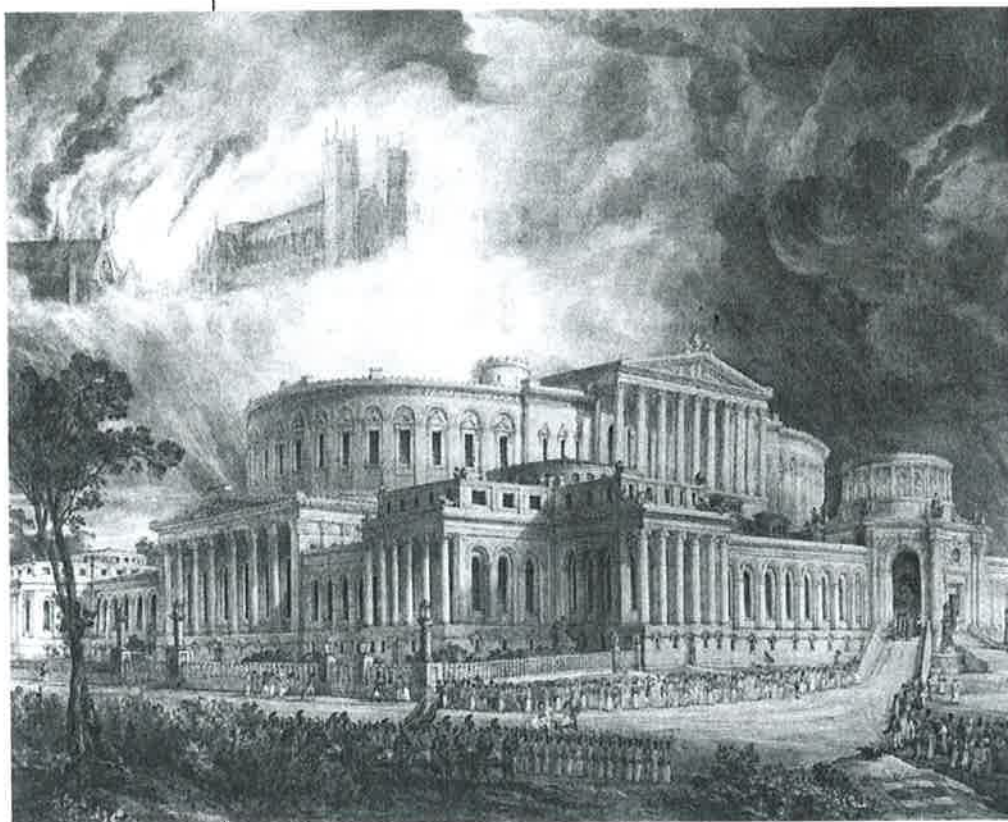
Nonetheless, the establishment of Leopold's rule in the Congo continued to bring incredible violence to the region. It was the natives who suffered from his greed and the brutality of his agents. His was not the only case where a claim of good intentions obscured a grim reality. To secure African regions, countries used armies of African slaves or free men or of paid soldiers in their conquests. Africans resisted these invasions and annexations every step of the way. In many cases the European governments also turned over the costly role of pacification and rule to their various mining, rubber, and other companies. In this document of 1886 the British government grants a charter to the National African Company that came to dominate trade in the Niger region. It gives broad powers to this private company while, like Leopold, it advertises the benefits that contact with Europeans would bring.

Victoria, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith. . . .

[W]hereas the Petition . . . states that the Kings, Chiefs, and peoples of various territories in the basin of the River Niger, in Africa, fully recognising after many years experience, the benefits accorded to their countries by their intercourse with the Company and their predecessors, have ceded the whole of their respective territories to the Company by various Acts of Cession [documents by which leaders surrendered their lands to imperialist agents] specified in the Schedule hereto. . . .

And whereas the Petition further states that the condition of the natives inhabiting the aforesaid territories would be materially improved, and the development of such territories and those contiguous thereto, and the civilization of their peoples would be greatly advanced if We should think fit to confer on the Company . . . Our Royal Charter. . . .

British imperialist visions, such as J. M. Gandy's plan for an imperial palace for British rulers and the government, became ever more grandiose. By the time this watercolor was painted in 1836, England had expanded to take over Scotland, Ireland, and increasing numbers of trading areas around the world.



1. The said NATIONAL AFRICAN COMPANY, LIMITED . . . is hereby authorized and empowered to hold and retain the full benefit of the several Cessions . . . and all rights, interests, authorities, and powers for the purposes of government, preservation of public order, protection of the said territories, or otherwise of what nature or kind soever. . . .

7. The Company as such, or its Officers as such, shall not in any way interfere with the religion of any class or tribe of the people of its territories, or of any of the inhabitants thereof, except so far as may be necessary in the interests of humanity. . . .

8. In the administration of Justice by the Company to the peoples of its territories, or to any of the inhabitants thereof, careful regard shall always be had to the customs and laws of the class, or tribe, or nation to which the parties respectively belong. . . .

12. The Company is hereby further authorized and empowered, subject to the approval of Our Secretary of State, to acquire and take by purchase, cession, or other lawful means, other rights, interests, authorities, or powers of any kind or nature whatever, in, over, or affecting other territories, lands, or property in the region aforesaid, and to hold, use, enjoy, and exercise the same for the purposes of the Company. . . .

14. . . . The customs duties and charges hereby authorized [that the Company shall collect] shall be levied and applied solely for the purpose of defraying the necessary expenses of government, including the administration of justice, the maintenance of order, and the performance of Treaty obligations. . . .

The Company from time to time, either periodically or otherwise, as may be directed by Our Secretary of State, shall furnish accounts and particulars in such form, and verified, in such manner as he requires, of the rates, incidence, collection, proceeds, and application of such duties. . . .

Russia, like Britain, had been colonizing for centuries, though its colonies were adjoining its frontiers, unlike the British transoceanic outposts. As Russia continued its expansion into east and central Asia by invading adjacent territories there, it annexed people of many ethnicities and religions. In this report of 1864, its government explained empire building to the other great powers in terms of state security and advancing civilization. In Russian eyes, expansion was a never-ending process.

The situation of Russia in central Asia is similar to that of all civilized states that come into contact with half-savage nomadic tribes without firm social organization. In such cases, the interests of border security and trade relations always require that the more civilized state have a certain authority over its neighbors, whose wild and unruly customs render them very troublesome. It begins first by curbing raids and pillaging. To put an end to these, it is often compelled to reduce the neighboring tribes to some degree of close subordination. Once this result has been achieved, the latter take on more peaceful habits, but in turn they are exposed to the attack of tribes living farther off. . . . The state therefore must make a choice: either to give up this continuous effort and doom its borders to constant unrest, which would make prosperity, safety, and cultural progress impossible here, or else to advance farther and farther into the heart of savage lands, where the vast distances, with every step forward, increase the difficulties and hardships it incurs. Such has been the fate of all states placed in a similar situation. The United States of America, France in Africa, Holland in its colonies, England in the East Indies—they all were inevitably driven to choose the path of onward movement, not so much from ambition as from dire necessity, where the greatest difficulty lies in being able to stop.

The Far East saw not only the Russians and the English but also virtually every other big power seeking its share of territory and trade by the end of the 19th century. French expansion had started in the early modern period as France colonized parts of the Caribbean, North America, and Asia. Its army, missionaries, and traders were on the front line of this expansion, often driving government policy. In the 1830s France's trade in raw materials and small manufactured goods with Africa picked up, and it began the brutal conquest of Algeria. European settlers then flocked to claim the farmland seized from the local Algerian peoples. After the Germans defeated the French emperor Napoleon III in 1870, France became a republic ruled by an elected government. In the new climate of freedom of the press and public debate, colonial expansion became a topic of heated discussion even as traders, explorers, and the military were delving further into Africa and other continents. Shouldn't the government worry more about Germany than the remote reaches of Indochina or Africa? What was to be gained from the expense of war, bureaucracy, and settlement? Should the French be constantly fighting indigenous peoples? Here, minister of the interior and former governor of Tonkin (present-day Vietnam) Ernst Constans pleads in the French parliament in 1888 for approval of funds to continue the effort of colonization in southeast Asia.

If you could see, as I have, the colonists of Haiphong and Hanoi; if you could see for yourselves the energy and ardor with which they work like mad, the conviction they muster to reach good results! Frankly you would think twice before taking part in a vote that will make these brave people believe themselves lost, them, their families and their property, if we abandon them . . . [Applause]

I know that it's not fashionable to say good things about Tonkin. I know that one needs a good deal of courage to say what one thinks; and the good things that I think of this country I will have the honor of saying here.

Messieurs, I believe that Tonkin can and must survive. I believe that it asks for nothing but to be developed and that it will develop itself if we give something of ourselves, give it a civilian administration and eliminate all its worries and all the difficulties that have been placed on it until now. I say that Tonkin can survive because I believe it to be rich. All parts along the

rivers are cultivated and cultivable. No one among those who has seen Tonkin can doubt that its Delta is a great source of wealth for the country. . . .

Tonkin has been at war for ten years. All the people from the mountains have fled to the valleys to avoid either foreign attacks or rebel invasions, and they have collected in numerous villages around rivers and streams that will give them security. Thus, the Delta has become overpopulated and the mountains depopulated. But it is absolutely sure that once the Annamites [Annam was a historic kingdom in eastern Indochina] understand that they have nothing to fear from us, they will return to the lands they have abandoned, which I have visited, which are lands on which one can grow everything, and on which one will do so in the future and to great profit. . . .

I am confident that this enterprise—the colonization of Tonkin—will fully succeed; I am convinced that two years from now, you will no longer have to debate subsidies for Tonkin, which will have become self-sufficient. . . .

In any case, you cannot, my dear colleagues, fault the feelings that I express here; it is based on facts; it is also a deep conviction, I have faith that Tonkin will survive and prosper if we want it to. . . .

Newcomers Join the Race for Empire

In 1868 the Japanese instituted a new government committed to modernization and development. The Meiji Restoration, a period so-named to mark "rebirth of enlightened rule" in Japan, involved extensive study of the West on the part of modernizers and an attempt at building an empire as the Europeans were doing. Japan saw empire as one key to Western power and also as a way to satisfy the old warrior classes, whose role had declined with the rise of industrial leaders and professionals. Korea, being a closed market where China and Russia were jockeying for control, seemed a logical point of expansion. As in the West, however, empire and the strategies leading to it were hotly contested. In 1873, soon after the Restoration, those who wanted a war of conquest in Korea were overridden by others who thought Japan unprepared as yet for such a venture. Saigō Takamori, a military leader, argues for war in a letter to a friend dated

In this French cartoon, Japan (left) and China fish in the same waters to catch Korea, while Russia watches the contest intently, its own fishing pole ready and waiting. All three powers had competing interests in East Asia, which affect international politics right down to the present day.



July 29, 1873—a communication that shows a military spirit of honor and sacrifice as well as training in diplomatic maneuvering.

Has any decision been made on Korea, now that Soejima [the foreign minister] is back? . . .

When a decision is at last reached, what will it involve if we send troops first? The Koreans will unquestionably demand their withdrawal, and a refusal on our part will lead to war. We shall then have fomented a war in a manner very different from the one you originally had in mind. Would it not be far better therefore to send an envoy first? It is clear that if we did so the Koreans would resort to violence, and would certainly afford us the excuse for attacking them.

In the event that it is decided to send troops first, difficulties may arise in the future [elsewhere]. Russia has fortified Saghalien [Sakhalin, between Russia and northern Japan] and other islands, and there have already been frequent incidents of violence. I am convinced that we should send troops to defend these places before we send them to Korea.

If it is decided to send an envoy officially, I feel sure that he will be murdered. I therefore beseech you to send me. I cannot claim to make as splendid an envoy as Soejima, but if it is a question of dying, that, I assure you, I am prepared to do.

Slowly the Japanese asserted their influence in Korea and gained control. This official document shows the Japanese government exercising the muscle that the development of its businesses and army gave it. Even though Korea was technically a sovereign state, Japanese diplomats believed they

could virtually set conditions for the functioning of the Korean government. It was only a short step to full annexation, which the Japanese accomplished in 1910 after the assassination of its resident governor in Korea.

1. The Korean Government shall pledge that they [will] adopt the administrative reform plan recommended by the Japanese Government and [will] carry it out step by step.

2. As to the construction of the railways between Seoul and Pusan and between Seoul and Inchon which is referred to in the reform plan, the Korean Government, so long as their public finance is not strong enough, shall enter into a contract with the Japanese Government or a Japanese company and start the construction of said railways. . . .

3. As to the telegraphic lines which have already been laid between Seoul and Pusan and between Seoul and Inchon by the Japanese Government, the Korean Government shall conclude a treaty . . . and shall maintain them.

4. The Korean Government shall employ Japanese on the recommendation of the Japanese Government as legal and political advisers for the execution of the Korean administrative reforms. But when these reforms have been accomplished the continued employment of those Japanese advisers shall be discussed between the two governments.

5. The . . . Japanese military instructors shall follow the provision of the preceding article.

6. In order to promote further amity and encourage commerce between the two countries, the Korean Government shall open a port for foreign trade in the province of Cholla.

Germany became a modern, unified nation-state only in 1871, when the dozens of independent territories and large kingdoms like Saxony and Bavaria joined together under the leadership of Prussia. Given their late start as a single nation, many in that country felt disadvantaged in comparison with the British and French colonization efforts that had spanned centuries. The first chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, helped Germany acquire a few colonies in order to gain the political support of traders and nationalists who saw empire as the road to grandeur. After Bismarck's dismissal in 1890, the new kaiser (emperor) William II sought colonies more aggressively. Powerful lobbies, or political pressure groups, developed to support expansionism. One of these, the Pan-German

"Every year on the anniversary of the Emperor Jimmu's accession . . . and on the anniversary of his passing . . . we should ceremonially increase the territory of the Japanese empire, even if it only be in small measure. Our naval vessels on each of these days should sail to a still unclaimed island, occupy it, and hoist the Rising Sun [the Japanese flag]."

—Shiga Shigetaka,
advocate of Japanese
expansion, 1890

"I would annex the planets if I could."
—Cecil Rhodes

League, presented a political rationale for world empire based on frank expressions of German racial superiority that needed to be fortified by global domination. By this time Germany had universal male suffrage, and the League helped mobilize support for the government in elections. It aimed to draw votes from working-class parties that often advocated peace and cooperation. Programs based on imperialist conquest and militant nationalism came to attract the millions of working men who now made up the electorate in an age of mass politics.

I. CONSTITUTION OF THE PAN-GERMAN LEAGUE

1. The Pan-German League strives to quicken the national sentiment of all Germans and in particular to awaken and foster the sense of racial and cultural kinship of all sections of the German people.
2. These aims imply that the Pan-German League works for:
 - a) Preservation of the German people in Europe and overseas and its support wherever threatened.
 - b) Settlement of all cultural, educational, and school problems in ways that shall aid the German people.
 - c) The combating of all forces which check the German national development.
 - d) An active policy of furthering German interests in the entire world. . . .

II. POLICIES OF THE PAN-GERMAN LEAGUE

1. Adoption of bill for reorganization of the navy.
2. Laying of a cable from Kiaochow to Port Arthur [both in China], with connection with the Russian-Siberian cable.
3. Strengthening of the German foothold in Kiaochow.
4. German coaling and cable stations in the Red Sea, the West Indies and near Singapore.
5. Complete possession of Samoa.
6. More subsidized German steamship lines to Kiaochow and Korea.
7. Understanding with France, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands about the laying of an independent cable from West Africa through the Congo to German East Africa, Madagascar, Batavia, and Tonkin to Kiaochow.
8. Development of harbor of Swakopmund and railroads to Windhoek [in German Southwest Africa]. . . .

10. Raising of the fund for German schools in foreign countries to 500,000 marks [from 150,000 marks], [a] division in foreign office to be created to deal with these schools; creation of pension fund for their teachers; standard German textbooks to be supplied to these schools. . . .

16. Prohibition of immigration of less worthy elements into the German Empire. . . .

22. Increase in the number of German commercial consuls in the Levant [the eastern Mediterranean], Far East, South Africa, Central and South America. . . .

The European settlers of the United States had defeated millions of the North American continent's inhabitants through warfare and disease. They then took the Native Americans' land for themselves and drove the remaining native peoples into "reservations." Although it purchased Alaska in 1867 from Russia, the new country mostly achieved its annexation of lands using the same kind of violence Europeans elsewhere did. After the Civil War, the United States began growing rich through rapid industrialization. It watched the expansion of other countries with increasing envy and distress because of the markets and sources of raw materials the great powers were coming to monopolize.

In the meantime, American missionaries and entrepreneurs had moved to islands in the Pacific, and many saw

By the mid-19th century, Americans had taken over Hawaiian land to set up sugar plantations, worked by local laborers, to feed a growing U.S. demand for sweets. Until the arrival of North Americans, Hawaiians had traded sandalwood and other products with Asia.



business opportunities in the decline of Spanish power over Cuba and other parts of its empire. Through a series of maneuvers, the monarchy of Hawaii came under the protection of the United States. But many politicians disagreed with the growing U.S. domination over the Hawaiian islands. The United States, they said, should not imitate the greedy and brutal ways of Europe. President Benjamin Harrison drew up a treaty to annex Hawaii when U.S. settlers like Sanford B. Dole, the pineapple planter, and missionaries led a coup to overthrow Queen Liliuokalani. But his successor, Grover Cleveland, withdrew the treaty. Advocates of annexation were enraged by Cleveland's move, and by 1898 popular sentiment for imperialism had gained the upper hand. In that year Hawaii was annexed and the United States defeated Spain, acquiring the Philippines in the process. Here is Harrison's justification for annexation in an 1893 message to Congress, followed by Grover Cleveland's reversal of policy.

The overthrow of the monarchy was not in any way promoted by this Government but had its origin in what seems to have been a reactionary and revolutionary policy on the part of Queen Liliuokalani, which put in serious peril not only the large and preponderating interests of the United States in the islands, but all foreign interests, and, indeed, the decent administration of civil affairs and the peace of the islands. It is quite evident that the monarchy had become effete and the Queen's Government so weak and inadequate as to be the prey of designing and unscrupulous persons. The restoration of Queen Liliuokalani to her throne is undesirable, if not impossible, and unless actively supported by the United States would be accompanied by serious disaster and the disorganization of all business interests. The influence and interest of the United States in the islands must be increased and not diminished.

Only two courses are now open—one the establishment of a protectorate by the United States, and the other annexation full and complete. I think the latter course, which has been adopted in the treaty, will be highly promotive of the best interests of the Hawaiian people, and is the only one that will adequately secure the interests of the United States. These interests are not wholly selfish. It is essential that none of the other great powers shall secure these islands. Such a possession would not consist with our safety and with the peace of the world.

When Grover Cleveland succeeded to the Presidency that same year, he withdrew the treaty. His justification to Congress reflected the kinds of doubts many had about empire.

I suppose that right and justice should determine the path to be followed in treating this subject. If national honesty is to be disregarded and a desire for territorial extension or dissatisfaction with a form of government not our own ought to regulate our conduct, I have entirely misapprehended the mission and character of our Government and the behavior which the conscience of our people demands of their public servants.

When the present Administration entered upon its duties, the Senate had under consideration a treaty providing for the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands to the territory of the United States. Surely under our Constitution and laws the enlargement of our limits is a manifestation of the highest attribute of sovereignty, and if entered upon as an Executive act all things relating to the transaction should be clear and free from suspicion. Additional importance attached to this particular treaty of annexation because it contemplated a departure from unbroken American tradition in providing for the addition to our territory of islands of the sea more than 2,000 miles removed from our nearest coast.

These considerations might not of themselves call for interference with the completion of a treaty entered upon by a previous Administration, but . . . it did not appear that [the] Provisional Government had the sanction of either popular revolution or suffrage. . . .

As I apprehend the situation, we are brought face to face with the following conditions:

The lawful Government of Hawaii was overthrown without the drawing of a sword or the firing of a shot by a process every step of which, it may safely be asserted, is directly traceable to and dependent for its success upon the agency of the United States acting through its diplomatic and naval representatives. . . .

But for the presence of the United States forces in the immediate vicinity and in position to afford all needed protection and support the committee [of planters and missionaries] would not have proclaimed the provisional government from the steps of the Government building. . . .

Believing, therefore, that the United States could not, under the circumstances disclosed, annex the islands without justly incurring the imputation of acquiring them by unjustifiable methods, I shall not again submit the treaty of annexation.



Hawaiian king Kalakaua topples from his throne in this 1887 cartoon. Foreign business classes and missionaries, especially from the United States, interfered in Hawaiian economic and political life. Eventually they succeeded in blocking Kalakaua's ability to rule effectively, though he kept his throne. "Hawaii for the Hawaiians" was his motto.