

Colonialism and Imperialism, 1450–1950

by Benedikt Stuchtey

The colonial encirclement of the world is an integral component of European history from the Early Modern Period to the phase of decolonisation. Individual national and expansion histories referred to each other in varying degrees at different times but often also reinforced each other. Transfer processes within Europe and in the colonies show that not only genuine colonial powers such as Spain and England, but also "latecomers" such as Germany participated in the historical process of colonial expansion with which Europe decisively shaped world history. In turn, this process also clearly shaped Europe itself.

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See also the article "Travail et migrations forcés dans les colonies européennes" in the EHNE. (→ [Media Link #ab](#))

Introduction

In world history, no continent has possessed so many different forms of colonies and none has so incomparably defined access to the world by means of a civilising mission as a secular programme as did modern Europe. When Spain and Portugal partitioned the world by signing the Treaty of Tordesillas (→ [Media Link #ac](#)) on 7 June 1494, they declared a genuine European claim to hegemony. A similar claim was never staked out in this form by a world empire of Antiquity or a non-European colonial power in the modern period, such as Japan or the USA. The extraordinary continuity of Chinese colonialism or that of the Aztecs in Central America before the Spaniards arrived is indeed structurally comparable to modern European expansion. But similar to the Phoenician and the Roman empires, the phenomenon of expansion usually ended with colonisation and not in colonial development. The imperial expansion since about 1870 was not a European invention but its chronological and spatial dimension was as unique as the variety of colonial methods of rule (→ [Media Link #ad](#)). It is characteristic that the impetus for colonialism was often derived as an answer to European history itself. This includes capitalist striving for profit, the colonies as valves for overpopulation, the spirit of exploration, scientific interest, and religious and ideological impulses up to Social-Darwinistic and racist motives. Colonialist urges of this type do not explain the expansionistic economic, military and other forces in the periphery that compelled the governments of the mother countries into a defensive pressing forward.

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What is now understood as globalisation (→ [Media Link #ae](#)) has a critical background in the world historical involvement of the non-European sphere from the Early Modern Period up and into the period of decolonisation (→ [Media Link #af](#)). No European country remained exempt – all directly or indirectly participated in the colonial division of the world. The Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) put global power thinking into words that perceived of colonial possessions as a political, economic and cultural right, last not least even as an obligation to a civilizing mission that was only definitively shaken with the independence of India in 1947.¹ These two dates mark the start and decline of a key problem in the history of Europe, perhaps even its most momentous, that the always precarious colonial rule caused complex competitions among Europeans just as much as among the indigenous population in the colonies, that it was able to simultaneously create cooperation and close webs of relationships between conquerors and the conquered, and that it was never at any time free of violence and war, despotism, arbitrariness and lawlessness. This turns the simultaneity and multitude of European colonialisms and imperialisms into a border-bridging experience. Few transnational specifics of European history illustrate the diversity of a European consciousness this clearly.

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But what was colonialism? If one looks back at the essential elements in the thought of the Spanish world empire since the 16th century, it was similar to that of the English and Portuguese up to the most recent time because of the often claimed idea that the European nations created their empires themselves without the participation of others. Conquest followed discovery: Christopher Columbus (ca. 1451–1506) (→ Media Link #ah) landed in 1492 on a West Indian island that he called San Salvador to emphasize the religious character of taking possession. (→ Media Link #ai) Spain's power was only definitively broken with the Treaty of Paris in 1763², which ended the Seven Years' War and solidified British colonial supremacy. It also revealed the entanglement between Europe and the American continent because the seed had been sown for the independence struggle of the United States as well as the revolutions in Central and South America between 1780 and 1820. After human and citizens rights had been fought for during the French Revolution, the first Black republic in world history arose in 1804 from a slave revolt in Haiti. Its leader François-Dominique Toussaint L'Ouverture (ca. 1743–1803) (→ Media Link #aj) had himself been a slave to his 45th year, was a student of French Jesuits and an admirer of the writings of Guillaume-Thomas Raynal (1711–1796) (→ Media Link #ak). Colonialism was by no means a one-dimensional affair with a simply European orientation and European discoverers such as Columbus and Vasco da Gama (1468–1524) (→ Media Link #al), who succeeded in making the first East India voyage in less than a decade after 1492. Instead, colonialism should be understood as a dynamic interaction in the context of which the colonial empires and the individual colonies massively influenced the historical development of their European mother countries. This even extended to the programmes of rulers' titles. Subsequent to da Gama successfully establishing trade relations with the Southwest Indian spice port of Calicut, king Manuel I (1469–1521) (→ Media Link #am) not only styled himself king of Portugal, but also lord of Arabia, Persia and India. Like the Portuguese world empire, the Spanish arrived in all of Europe because European and non-European immigrants participated as much as did the natives in the colonies. The Spanish empire can hardly be imagined without Belgians, Italians and Chinese, while commerce and administration in the Portuguese empire was shaped to a significant degree by Germans, Flemings, Moslems and Jews.³

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Colonialism and Imperialism

According to Wolfgang Reinhard, colonialism in terms of a history of ideas constitutes a "developmental differential" due to the "control of one people by an alien one".⁴ Unlike the more dynamic, but also politically more judgmental and emotionally charged form of imperialism, colonialism as the result of a will to expand and rule can initially be understood as a state that establishes an alien, colonial rule. It has existed in almost all periods of world history in different degrees of expression. Even after the official dissolution of its formal state in the age of decolonisation, it was possible to maintain it as a myth, as in Portugal after the Carnation Revolution in 1974, when the dictatorship of António de Oliveira Salazar (1889–1970) (→ Media Link #an) was debated but hardly ever the colonial past in Angola, Mozambique, Goa, Macao and East Timor. Already in 1933, the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre stated the thesis that the Portuguese as the oldest European colonial nation had a special gift for expansion in his controversial book *Casa-grande e Senzala (The Masters and the Slaves)*. It consisted of peacefully intermingling the cultures without racism (→ Media Link #ao) and colonial massacres. Using the example of Brazil, he rationalized colonial paternalism with the allegedly successful relationship between masters and slaves.

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But other colonial powers also claimed this for themselves. Even the harshest critics of expansion policies – starting with Bartolomé de las Casas (1474–1566) (→ Media Link #ap) to the Marxist-Leninist criticism of the 20th century – did not doubt the civilising mission that justified colonial hegemony.⁵ Similar to the abolitionists (→ Media Link #aq), they criticised the colonial excesses that could mean mismanagement, corruption and, in the extreme case, genocide. However, that the colonies became an integral part of the mother country, that therefore the colonial nation is indivisible, at home on several continents and, thus, incapable of doing any fundamental evil, can be shown to be part of the European colonial ideology since its earliest beginnings. Intellectual transfer processes had already taken place at this time, in the Age of Enlightenment (→ Media Link #ar) most noticeably in the mutual influence of Adam Smith (1723–1790) (→ Media Link #as), Denis Diderot (1713–1784) (→ Media Link #at), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) (→ Media Link #au) and their contemporaries.⁶ They agreed on a moderate critique of colonial expansion and a simultaneous enthusiastic, cosmopolitan exuberance for appropriating the world outside of Europe. Though slavery and cosmopolitanism could theoretically not be brought to a common denominator, in practice the conquest explained its legitimacy since the 16th century with its own success. The Dutch, English, Portuguese, Spanish, French and Russian colonial enterprises, which each surveyed the world in its own manner with soldiers, scientists, merchants and missionaries, shared the common perception of the "Other" on the basis of the presumed cultural superiority of the "Self". As different as the spread of Christianity proceeded with the nonconformist, dissenting elements of Protestantism in North America and the Catholic forces in South America so, too, was the result different in the end. Spain, for example, was not able to use Latin America for a profitable export economy, but by contrast the British succeeded in monopolising the slave trade as a most lucrative long-distance business.

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When, during the course of the 19th century, the Italians, Belgians and Germans raised a claim to their share of the world in addition to the old colonial powers, the term "Imperialism" became an ideologically loaded and overall imprecise, but probably irreplaceable historiographical concept.⁷ During the phase of High Imperialism between 1870 and World War I, every larger European nation state as well as the USA and Japan participated in acquiring territories outside Europe. That is what makes this period so unique in European history, though measured against other criteria, such as time and space, it was not more spectacular than previous ones. Thus, the European conquest of North and South America in the 16th and 17th

centuries or of India in the 18th and early 19th centuries was no less incisive in its spatial dimension or the number of people brought under European rule as was the "Scramble for Africa" that became synonymous with the unsystematic and overly hasty intervention of Europeans in the entire African continent. But unlike in earlier periods, a broad European public for the first time participated politically, economically and culturally directly in the process of that expansion. It had deep-reaching effects on the historical development of the European societies themselves, which is reflected, for example, in the professional careers of politicians, diplomats and high-ranking military men. After all, it was caused by massive economic and diplomatic rivalries between the European colonial powers and a widespread chauvinism.

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Likewise, this process was to a significant extent triggered by internal crises in Africa itself. As in the 16th century, the rivalry between Christian and Islamic missions (→ Media Link #av) again erupted in the North of Africa. In a classic of the historiography of imperialism, Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher explain that Europe is not the only place for understanding the motives of European expansion. According to Robinson and Gallagher, this motivation was primarily founded in Africa, at least, as far as late Victorian society was concerned.⁸ If non-Western societies were no longer just the victims of Europe and quite a few of their elites participated in colonial and imperial rule, a layer of European settlers, Christian missionaries, colonial officers etc., who bridged the "periphery" and the "centre", became a third force known in research as the "men on the spot". Their lobbying influence on the expansion of the colonial empires was no less than that of political and economic interest groups in the metropole, even though their motivations depended more situationally on the events in the colonies than could be or would be the case in the European centres of power. This can be shown equally for the Asian, the African and the Pacific regions. Colonial sites of remembrance and their culture of monuments recall to this day conflicts and ambivalences of European colonial rule in public memory.⁹

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This circumstance made High Imperialism a European and global project at both the centre and the periphery. Furthermore, it illustrates the critical significance of political and military force in the imperial process. "Gunboat diplomacy", one of the historical buzzwords for Europe's intercourse with Africa in the final third of the 19th century, also occurred in Turkey and China. Informal imperialism, often equated with the dominance of free trade (→ Media Link #aw) over other methods of colonial influence, lost ground to the extent that coercion could only be exercised by violence. This is well illustrated by the war with China over the opium trade (1840–1842). The brutal suppression of the Indian "mutiny" in 1857/1858 by the British (→ Media Link #ax) constitutes the opposite of the Manchester School of Economics' view that, based on free trade rather than unilateral exploitation, the world would find a balance of peaceful and cooperative exchange between Europe and the non-European sphere. The protection of national economic interests or the defence of prestige later led several German observers to the conclusion that the English were conducting a commercial imperialism, whereas the French wanted to enhance the respect for their nation in the world.

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Nevertheless, the "informal empire" was the prevailing model. In the British context, this led to the exaggerated thesis that the nation was not interested in expansion and that in this regard it was characterized by "absentmindedness".¹⁰ Those who currently perceive global capitalism as the successor of formerly direct territorial rule because it exercises no less pressure on the political and social systems to impose its economic interests, see the origins of informal imperialism reaching deep into the 19th century. Until the recent past, this thesis could be countered by noting that it not only underestimates the scale of the creation of global empires but also their dissolution.¹¹ The consequences of the problematic withdrawal of the French from Algeria, the Italians from Eritrea or the British from India and Ireland still remain present. In this respect, colonisation and decolonisation were two historical processes referring to each other, comparable to the systole and diastole of the metropolitan heart beat. Only the interaction of these two as well as numerous other factors resulted in the world historical consequences of European expansion.

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Regions and periods

Colonial regions and their limits as well as periods and their caesuras offer two possibilities of approaching European colonialism. For example, the independence of the North American colonies in 1776 (→ Media Link #ay) marks one of the most important turning points – from the Atlantic to the Asian aspect of the British empire – and, also, the first experience of decolonization of global significance in the history of European imperialism. The second only began in the 1950s, here especially on the African continent and, offset in time from the freedom movements of Central and South America as well as Asia. In the 18th century, the foremost European colonial powers, led by England, solidified their global hegemonic position. If they did not create overseas empires, they conquered territories in the form of a continental colonialism as the Russian monarchy did in Siberia and the Habsburgs in South-eastern Europe. This continental variant was equivalent in nature to the later westward shift of the American *Frontier* and the north migration of the South African boundary as well as the subimperialism, e.g. of Egypt and the Sudan. While the direct penetration of North and South America was almost entirely completed, that of the Asian and African sphere only began on a larger scale after 1800 – in Africa, for example, after 1830 with the French conquest of Algeria, from which Morocco and Tunis were also to be brought under French influence. The Russian conquest of Siberia, which followed the course of the rivers similar to the American expansion, aimed to acquire the lucrative fur trade. Concurrent with the mining of gold and precious stones in Brazil, silver mines were also found in the Siberian highland and the financial as well as the

informational value of a caravan route between Russia and China was recognized. The coastal fort colonies that the Dutch operated in Indonesia (→ Media Link #az) and the English on the coasts of India initially were reserved for commercial interests in spices, tea, coffee and cotton. As long as they did not expand inland and develop larger areas, they lacked military value.

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In 1772, when governor Warren Hastings (1732–1818) (→ Media Link #bo) strove not only for economic but also for the political and administrative development of the hinterland in Bengal and his administration was overshadowed by numerous scandals, his famous critic Edmund Burke (1729–1797) (→ Media Link #b1) vented his anger on the methods of colonial rule. In this way, he also directed attention to the newly formed field of tension of the competing powers of the administrative centre in London and the "men on the spot", those increasingly more powerful servants of European colonialism who at the same time also pursued their own interests in the periphery. In the 19th century, this would become a fixed *topos* of mutual accusations when businesses based on shares and founded on the model of the East India Company (chartered in 1559, monopoly to 1858), and comparable to the Dutch Vereenigden Oost-Indischen Compagnie (1602–1798), were raised by Sweden, Denmark, Scotland, Austria, Brandenburg-Prussia and Poland and were partly equipped with sovereign rights. Financially, they were based on the exchanges, which were becoming ever more central to European economic life, and a modern banking system that coordinated the international trade in luxury goods, such as silk, with that in foods novel to Europe, such as potatoes, maize and rice. Only the English company flourished in the long run. Within limits, the Dutch company, which focused on the spice trade and participated in expanding the colonial empire in Southeast Asia, also succeeded. The British created a cotton monopoly. With the trade in goods, for example, coffee from Java and tea from China, Europeans continuously developed new areas, especially Asia, that could be "opened" almost without violence (China since 1685). The formal use of colonial violence was symbolized in its most illustrative form in the slave trade with the establishment of slave ports on the coasts of West and East Africa as the starting points of slave shipments to the plantations of Middle and South America.

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South Africa, since the 17th century developed by the Dutch as a settlement colony (→ Media Link #b4) and since 1815 of importance to the British because of its gold and diamond mines, is exempted from this. Similar to Egypt, it played a special role, including with regard to its perception by Europeans. The shipping routes around the Cape and through the Suez Canal were of elementary significance from the perspective of military and commercial politics. Furthermore, a presence in Egypt held great symbolic significance, as manifested in attempts at its conquest from Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) (→ Media Link #b5) to Adolf Hitler (1889–1945). Remarkable in this parallel is the belief that focussed power in Europe and on the Nile – as the access to Asia – was a condition of concentrated power in the world. A British colonial administrator such as Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer (1841–1917) (→ Media Link #b6), who was stationed in Calcutta and Cairo, knew like none other that the survival of the empire depended as much on India, the Jewel in the Crown, as on the Suez Canal. His book *Ancient and Modern Imperialism* (1910) is a testimonial of intimate knowledge of the manner in which colonial rule functioned, as they were handed down at various administrative posts. What the British were willing to spend on the defence of their interests some 6,000 miles from London is evident from the, on the whole devastating, South African War (also Second Boer War, 1899–1902). (→ Media Link #b7) Volunteers from numerous European countries fought on the side of the Boers against the British, who in turn recruited large military contingents in Australia and Canada. The legend of imperial rule irretrievably lost its legitimacy when in 1956 the British and the French armies had to leave the Suez Canal Zone under pressure from the USA and the Soviet Union. Therefore, the Canal as well as the Cape were areas of first rank in the encounters of Europeans and non-Europeans as well as areas of encounter in the sequence of various European colonialisms.

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Precisely defined dividing lines between periods are impossible in this panorama as a matter of course. For this, the enterprises in which all European colonial powers were more or less involved (voyages of discovery (→ Media Link #b8), scientific projects such as cartography, construction of mercantilist colonial economies etc.) were too different in their time spans and too fluid, while the interactions between Europe and the rest of the world, which were subjected to continuous change, were too divergent. However, there were phases in the overall development of European colonialism that can be separated in analogy to the development of the great power system of the European states:

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1. In the beginning, Portugal and Spain (in personal union 1580–1640) were primarily interested in overseas trade to Brazil and the Philippines and inspired by Christian missionary zeal. With few exceptions, they managed to avoid colonial overlap.

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2. By contrast, competition heated up in the 17th century, when the English, French and Dutch pressed forward, initially not in the territories of the Spaniards and the Portuguese, but in neighbouring regions. This is demonstrated in exemplary manner by the North American Atlantic coast between the French possessions in modern Canada and the Spanish claims in the South.

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3. When it became impossible to avert the crisis of the *Ancien Régime* in Europe any longer, the colonial empires also lost their cohesion. The British won against their French rival in North America and India, against the Dutch in Southeast Asia and against the Spanish in South America. The independence of the United States was substituted with supremacy in India, in South Africa and especially on the seas with the almost peerless Royal Navy and modern free trade.

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4. The colonial incorporation of Africa on a large scale began with France's conquest of Algeria in 1830, which at the same time more than before released Europe's internal economic and industrial tensions as colonialist forces and peaked in High Imperialism between 1870 and World War I.¹²

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5. Since the origins of a pluralistic colonial system during the course of the 19th century, not only the Europeans were involved in dividing the world but also Japan and Russia. The USA is the prototype for a successful linkage of continental internal colonisation in the form of the westward shift of the Frontier and maritime colonial policy in the Asian sphere, while paradoxically being the most successful model of anti-colonialism. At the latest around 1900, the European system of great powers stood before the challenge of global competition. In the controversial interpretation of Niall Ferguson, it was logical that the USA would assume Britain's role as the "global hegemon" in the 20th century and marginalize the formal and informal colonialism of Europe but also continue globalization as "anglobalisation".¹³

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Forms

Since the 16th century, genuine European colonial powers such as Spain, Portugal, France and Britain were distinguished by developing a concept of their world rule and basing it on the legacy of Rome.¹⁴ This does not mean that stragglers like Italy, Belgium and Germany did not produce their own forms of imperial thought and had specific colonial systems with which they caught up to the great historical empires. German colonial officials, pragmatists such as Heinrich Schnee (1871–1949) (→ Media Link #b9) and Carl Peters (1856–1918) (→ Media Link #ba), saw German colonialism in the light of and in delimitation against British and French colonialism as well as in the context of world politics. They also participated in the virtually Europe-wide debate about the possible model function that the Roman Empire had for Europe. However, unlike the empires of the late 19th century, Spanish world rule was characterized by being pre-modern, and British colonial rule no later than 1750 held a geographical sway without example, which makes a thorough concept of empire and expansionism a precondition. Their shared reference frame was the Atlantic world, which as a historical concept for determining colonial practices had gained acceptance.¹⁵ In this case, "imperiality" and "globality" were one and carried by a Christian universalist, almost messianic claim to leadership. However, the price that Spain came to pay for its position as world-empire was high and due to the European constellation of powers. Its global superiority was offset by rejecting the claim to the imperial title of the Holy Roman Empire as a consequence of the division of the Habsburg inheritance.

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The empires of the modern nation state were not exposed to a loss of unity associated with the global dimension. Their expansion drive was primarily conditioned by worldly factors such as profit and prestige, in any case not a concept of universal monarchy indebted to Christian salvation, peace and justice. The world empire thought of Charles V (1500–1558) (→ Media Link #bb) survived to the extent that the civilising mission of the modern European imperialisms became a transnational, but not primarily religious motor. Their driving forces were very different, not necessarily ideological but, in the French case, they constituted a part of the cost/benefit calculation. In 1923, Albert Sarraut (1872–1962) (→ Media Link #bc), the governor general of Indochina, defined the *leitmotiv* of "mise en valeur" (development) and based it on the concept that the colonies are merely an extraterritorial component of a "Greater France" or a "France Africaine".¹⁶ There already were similar considerations in Victorian England with regard to the white settlement colonies, such as Canada and Australia. For the historian John Robert Seeley (1843–1895) (→ Media Link #bd) and before him Charles Dilke (1843–1911) (→ Media Link #be), the empire signified the "expansion of England" into a colonial world, in which cricket would be played just as in Oxford.¹⁷ Nation and expansion were conditional upon each other without relinquishing diversity. James Anthony Froude (1818–1894) (→ Media Link #bf) warned that whoever overemphasized the value of India and the African colonies also underestimated that of the "white settlements". His book *Oceana, or England and her colonies* (1886) was an attempt at staging the British empire as the legitimate heir of the Roman republic: The former followed the principle of politically wise forms of government when it subordinated colonialism and republicanism to reason and with it attributed more weight to the code of the virtue of good government than to the authority of military or economic monopolies of violence in the African and Asian colonies.¹⁸ Winston Churchill (1874–1965) (→ Media Link #bg) invented for this the exclusive term "English-speaking peoples".

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That this rule could apply to the overseas empires but would be different for continental ones like that of the Habsburgs was discussed by contemporary observers in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy's sphere of influence and especially in delimitation against the pulsating German empire. Austrian imperial history was formulated in imperial terminology – after all, the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina was officially accepted at the

Congress of Berlin in 1878. However, the Habsburg Empire was not centralistic but multinational in concept and tolerated local independence up to the confirmation of regional and religious diversity. Habsburg's deficit of not being able to provide a national identity was partially compensated by strengthening the popular dynasty, although it, in the person of Emperor Franz Joseph (1830–1916) (→ Media Link #bh), was not equal to the extreme High Imperialism of the turn of the century. The empire was governed in a nostalgic rather than modern manner. Where similar backward tendencies appeared in other European monarchies, a balance was sought using political and cultural measures. One of the best known examples is the crowning of Victoria (1819–1901) (→ Media Link #bi) as the empress of India in 1876, which was in a manner an imitation of the Bonapartist succession practice of the Spanish monarchy in South America. Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881) (→ Media Link #bj) pushed Victoria's imperial title forward because he saw a crisis coming toward Britain and the empire with the monarch's Germanism and obliviousness to duty after the death of her prince consort Albert (1819–1861) (→ Media Link #bk). Subsequently, British imperialism became even more unrivalled and the centrality of Europe in the world of the 19th century became even more clearly an economic, military and maritime centrality of Great Britain. Based on the Royal Navy and world trade, the *Pax Britannica* symbolized this programme of a pacifist colonialism. In the concept of a peace-making world empire, there could be several global players but only one global hegemon. This idealisation of maritime rule was reflected in Alfred Mahan's (1840–1914) (→ Media Link #bl) classic *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* (1890), a manifesto of the triumphal "anglobalisation", that is the earth-girding and people-uniting expansion of the Occident (→ Media Link #bm).

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The overseas as well as the continental colonial empires of Europe were together characterised by constructing their imperial rule over a developmental differential against the "Other" and, thus, significantly contributed to a changed self-perception of Europe in the world. Essentially, it was more about self-image than the image of others. Rule was alien rule over peoples perceived as being "subject". It had to be achieved with violent conquest and secured with colonial methods to guarantee economic, military and cultural exploitation. Therefore, the European claim to superiority legitimised the logic of the unequal interrelationship between colonial societies and a novel capitalism in Europe, especially the British "gentlemanly capitalists",¹⁹ whose global reach came to bear in a particularly pronounced form as the slave economy. Nowhere was the ambivalence between ruthless hegemonic ambition on one hand and concepts such as world citizenship, cosmopolitanism and human rights, which were derived from the Enlightenment, more clear than in slavery on the other hand.²⁰ Slavery, which made use of the idea of the different natures of people, culminated in the race theories of High Imperialism. Probably no European colonial power remained aloof from this discussion, which with the help of medicine, anthropology, ethnology etc. was founded on pseudoscience, guided by practical benefit and brought the contradictions and perversions of imperialism to a climax. French debates from Arthur de Gobineau's (1816–1882) (→ Media Link #bn) *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, 1853) (→ Media Link #bo) to Georges Vacher de Lapouge's (1854–1936) (→ Media Link #bp) *Race et milieu social: essais d'anthroposociologie* (1909) profited in the same way as the British controversies involving, for example, Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1914) (→ Media Link #bq) from the stereotypical ideas that colonial officials brought back to the centres of power from their every day experiences. The genocide of the Germans against the Herero and Nama in German Southwest Africa (1903–1907) (→ Media Link #br) is one of many testimonials, the reign of terror of the Belgian king Leopold II (1835–1909) (→ Media Link #bs) in the Congo another. (→ Media Link #bt)

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Outlook

Therefore, the concept of a "Europeanisation of the world" signifies the dilemma. On one hand, there are positive achievements, such as modern statehood, urbanisation, rationalism and Christianity, European thought systems such as Liberalism, Socialism and Positivism, which was received with great enthusiasm in France and England as well as in Brazil and Japan. On the other hand, there are negative legacies, such as Caesarism, racism and colonial violence. It can also raise the question whether European history between about 1450 and 1950 cannot be predominantly read as a history of expansion, especially if one treats the history of the empires beyond Eurocentrism as world history but without underlaying it with a universal theory and without constructing it as a historical unity. With the treaty to divide the world of 1494, a more intensive interaction of nation, expansion and "Europeanisation of the world" began that was not a unilateral creation of dependencies but a process of give and take with reciprocal influences beyond fixed imperial boundary drawing. According to this multipolar dynamic, Europe was not decentralised or provincialised,²¹ but Europe is equally unsuitable as the only perspective in the interpretation of the global modern period.²²

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Benedikt Stuchtey (→ Media Link #bu)

Appendix

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Notes

1. ^ Korman, Right of Conquest 1996.
2. ^ ^ Digitized version of the peace treaty, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, online:
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Copy Editor: Jennifer Willenberg

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