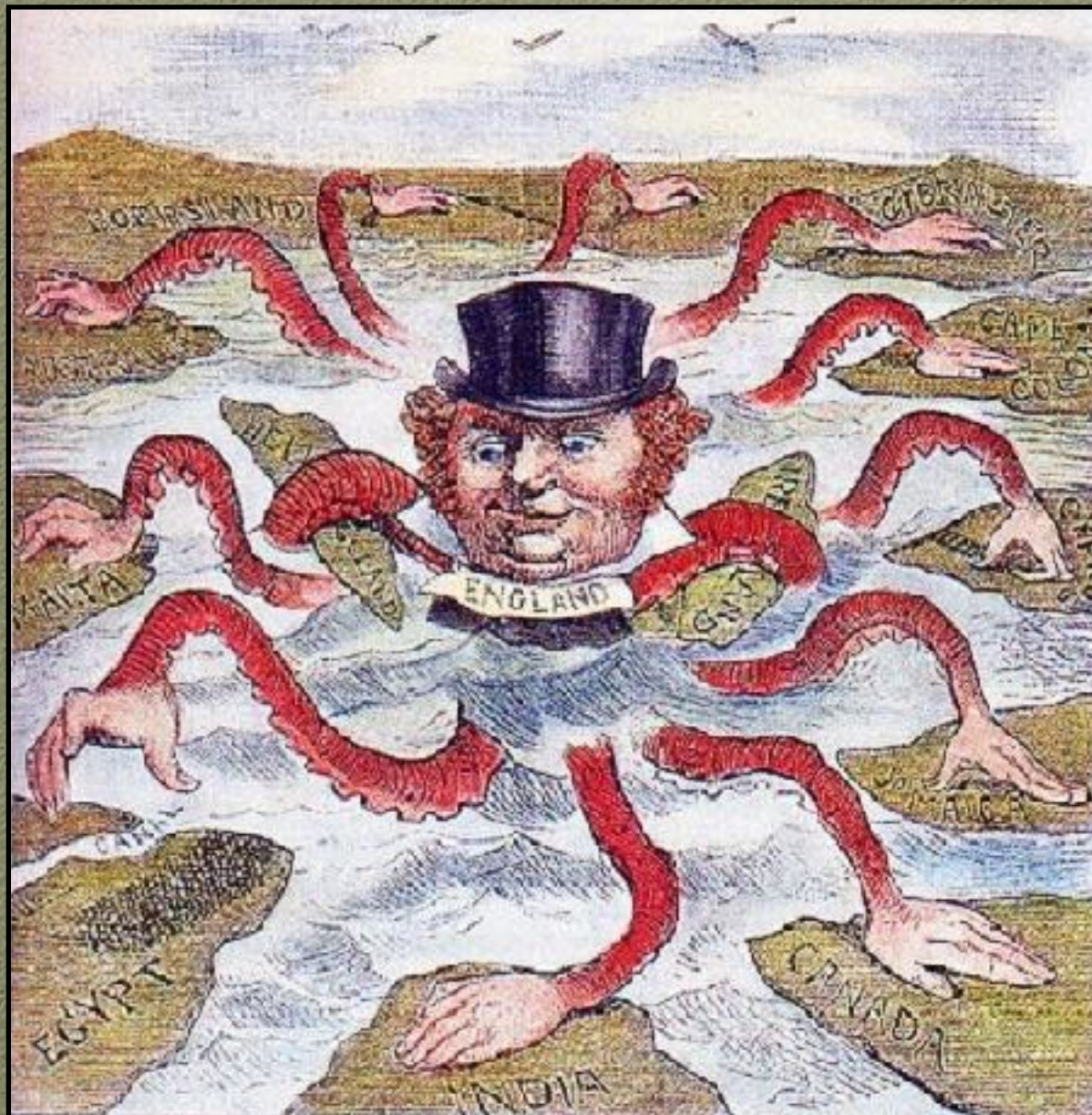


# UNIT THREE:

# IMPERIALISM

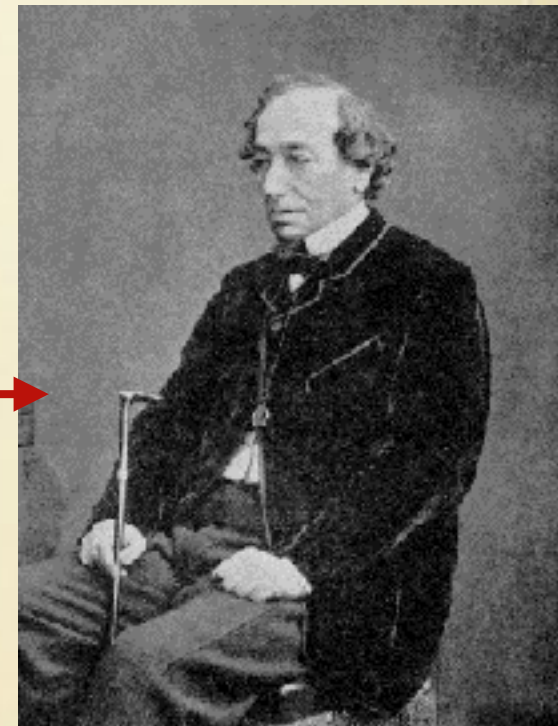


# INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

- Imperialism is the process by which one state (with superior military power) imposes its control over the land, resources, and population of a less developed region.
- This **not new** in 19th-century Europe. Europe had been exploiting and controlling overseas colonies (primarily in the “new world” — the Americas)
- From 1880 until 1914, we see a **dramatic** and **violent** increase in European imperialism across the globe, primarily in **Africa** and **Asia**. This is referred to as the age of “High Imperialism” or “New Imperialism” to distinguish it from earlier forms of colonialism and empire building before 1880.

# BEFORE THE 1880's

- Percentage of the world's population controlled by European countries:
  - 1500: 7%
  - 1800: 35%
  - 1914: 84%
- Looking at the **British Empire** specifically, by 1900 it included 1/4 of the world's land mass, 4.5 million square miles, and 66 million people.
- This is all the more surprising, because in 1852 the British Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli referred to Great Britain's existing colonies as “wretched” and “a millstone” around England's neck. This is to say: he understood them as a burden. 
- Similarly, a British foreign minister recalled that in 1880 no one in the Foreign Office was thinking or talking about Africa. By 1885 all the nations of Europe were competing with one another for control of the African continent.
- **So**, how and why does this happen in a relatively short period of time?
- Let's start by looking at the history of imperialism before 1880 in Europe's two largest empires: Great Britain and France.



# IMPERIALISM BEFORE 1880: GREAT BRITAIN

- Great Britain already has a substantial global Empire by the middle of the nineteenth century.
- People said that “the sun never sets on the British Empire” because they *literally* had colonial holdings all over the world, from Australia, to South Africa, to Canada.
- For example during the first world’s fair, called “The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations” held in London in 1851, Great Britain set up pavilions that showcased English technological innovations and regional traditions, *but also* all of their colonial populations.
- The pictures that follow can be found in greater detail and with an accompanying description and analysis on the British Library’s website at this address:
  - <https://www.bl.uk/victorian-britain/articles/the-great-exhibition>



CANADA.



COLONIAL PRODUCE.



INDIA N° 3.

# GREAT BRITAIN IN INDIA

- The last of these images depicted India, the “Jewel” of the British Empire, which in 1851 was operated by a British joint-stock company called the **British East India Company**, which had been controlling India since 1757.
- In **1857** a rebellion broke out, beginning with Indian troops in the British Army. This was an attempted war of liberation for India but it failed.
- The Rebellion was ultimately repressed (violently), but the fact that it happened shocked the British Government, which dissolved the British East India Company and made India under the direct control of the British crown.
- The Queen of England at this time was **Queen Victoria I**, who then became the “Empress of India” in 1877.
- Once India was under the direct control of England, things changed:
  - Great Britain exercised much stricter control over the administration of India, including its schools, agriculture, railroad construction, etc.
  - This resulted in a slight increase in the Indian standard of living, but in general this was all done to increase profits for Great Britain, not India
  - For example, the British government banned Indian manufacturers from producing goods that might compete with British products, which destroyed local Indian economies. Raw Indian cotton was shipped to England where it was woven into cloth and then re-exported to India where it was sold back to the Indian population to make a profit for British manufacturers.



# IMPERIALISM BEFORE 1880:

## FRANCE IN NORTH AFRICA

- One of the last things that King Charles X of France did (before he was overthrown by the Revolution of 1830) was to order the Invasion of Algeria in 1830 —————→
- The French government after Charles X gradually increased French control over North Africa and recruited French citizens to relocate to Algeria and establish a strong and permanent settler population.
- By the end of the 19th century, there were hundreds of thousands of white French people living in Algeria.
- Algeria was considered to be “a part of France” and was technically subject to French laws, **but of course** there was a separate set of laws for Catholic and Jewish white settlers in Algeria (called “**pieds noirs**”) and the black and brown (many of who were Muslim) population of African descent.
- Similarly all of the best land and any important positions of power within government and business were only open to the European settler populations.

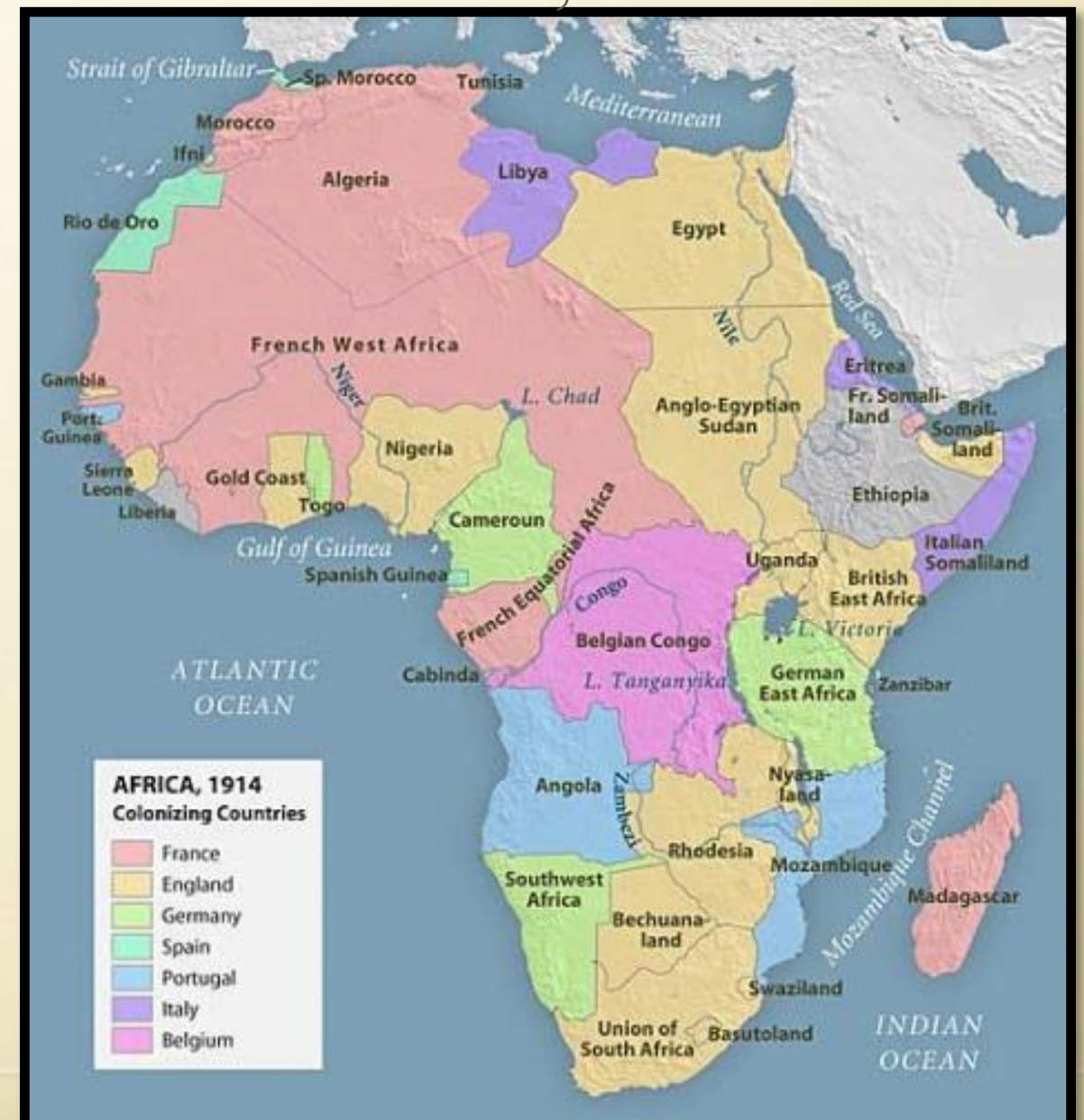


- Other than France in Algeria (Purple in Map 1), Great Britain in South Africa (Orange in Map 1), the European presence in Africa before 1880 was really limited to a few coastal ports. No one in Europe really knew (or cared) much about the African interior. They probably would have been surprised to find out, for example, that there were about 700 autonomous societies with distinctive political structures throughout the continent.
- *This all changed* in the 1880s as one European country after another tried to conquer as much African territory as possible. This is referred to as the **Scramble for Africa** and it had a devastating effect on the continent of Africa. Compare the maps on the left and right. Look how the political division of the continent changed in such a short period of time!

## Africa, c. 1870



## Africa, 1914



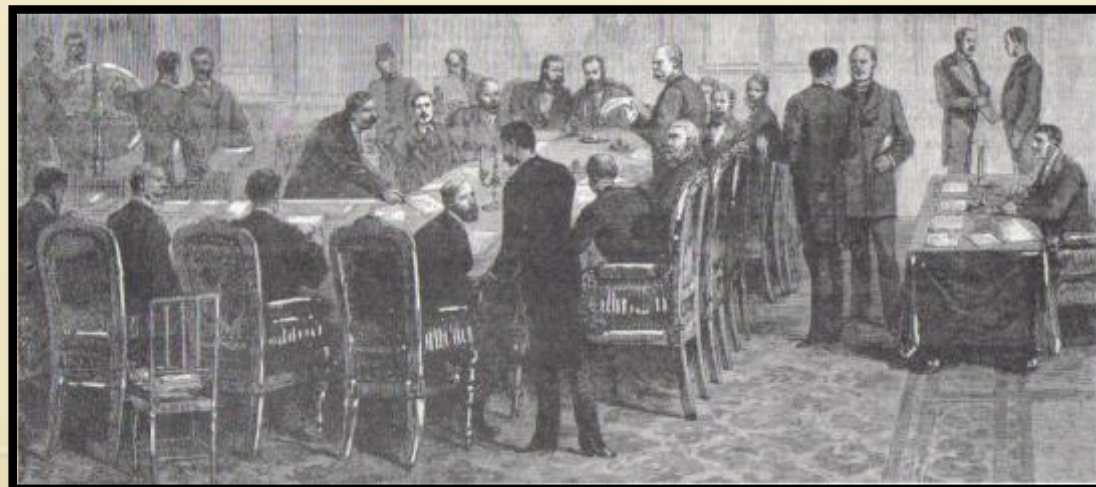
# THE “SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA”

- The European frenzy to colonize Africa is an outgrowth of 19th century European politics.
- After France’s humiliation in the Franco-Prussian war, it really wanted to reinvent itself (again) as a nation and to recover some of its lost prestige.
- In 1881 France (now a Republic) invades Tunisia (next to Algeria in North Africa) under false pretenses.
- England sees France making moves to expand its control over North Africa and feels that its interests in the region are being threatened.
- France & England start competing over control of regions in North Africa.
- Meanwhile, other countries start funding expeditions to map the African interior.
- The most infamous example of this is the tiny (and new!) kingdom of Belgium (which only dates to the 1830 revolution, if you recall), which is eager to make itself into a major European player.
- The King of Belgium, Leopold II, funds the British explorer Henry Stanley to launch an expedition into central Africa, and acquire as many “agreements” as he can from local African authorities handing over control of their territories to Leopold II.
- Leopold II rules “the Belgian Congo” as a **private possession** until the beginning of the 20th century, and does so with exceptional violence and brutality.
- One of the main exports of the Congo is **rubber**, and under Leopold’s control, much of the Congolese population is terrorized into harvesting as much rubber as possible for export to Europe.
- France follows Belgium’s lead and also acquires a large swath of territory in central Africa along the Congo River.
- Germany also joins in this race (somewhat reluctantly, since **Bismarck** thought it was better to focus on domestic and European affairs, but his opinion is in the minority).

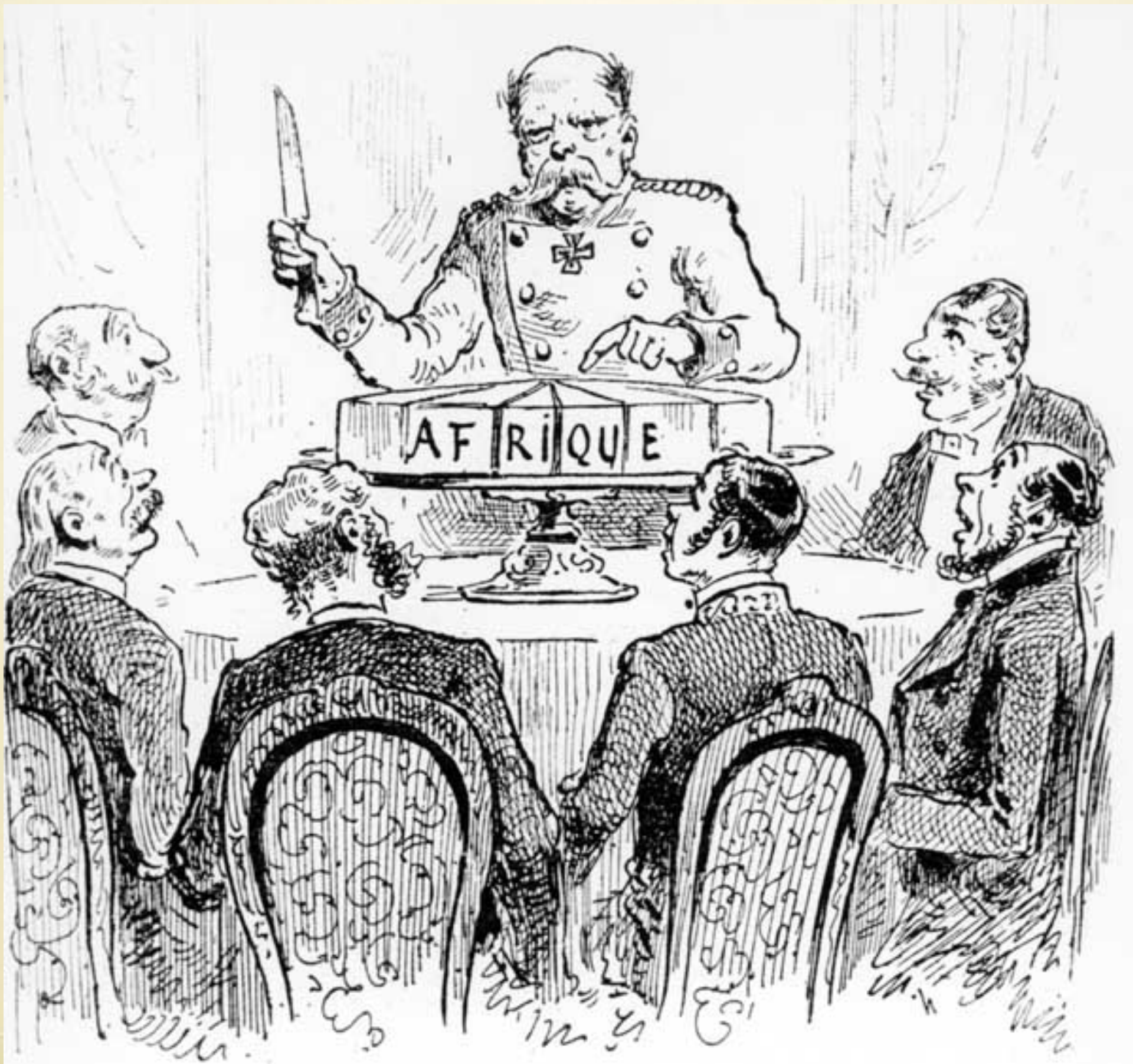


# THE BERLIN CONFERENCE (1884-85)

- In 1884 **Bismarck** calls for an international conference, in which European powers will discuss “ground rules” for the division of the African continent.
- This meeting, the **Berlin Conference of 1884-1885** includes representatives of all major European powers, but (no surprise here), does not include any African representatives.
- The goal of the Berlin Conferences is to make sure that competition over African territory does not result in conflict (war) on European territory. They need to figure out how to fairly divide up, what some are calling “the magnificent African cake” (this idea is illustrated in the 19th century political cartoon on the next slide)
- The representatives at the Berlin Conference decide that the nations of Europe will respect one another’s sovereignty (right to rule) over African territories if two conditions are present:
  - First, the European country must have some evidence (like a treaty) showing agreement from the local African population, which grants them control over the territory (keep in mind that these treaties were almost universally obtained under false pretenses).
  - Second, the European country needed to have “effective presence” in the region: they needed “boots on the ground” or some military, police, or administrative presence to exert their authority.
- As a consequence of the Berlin Conference, European war did not break out. At least not yet....



# The Magnificent African Cake



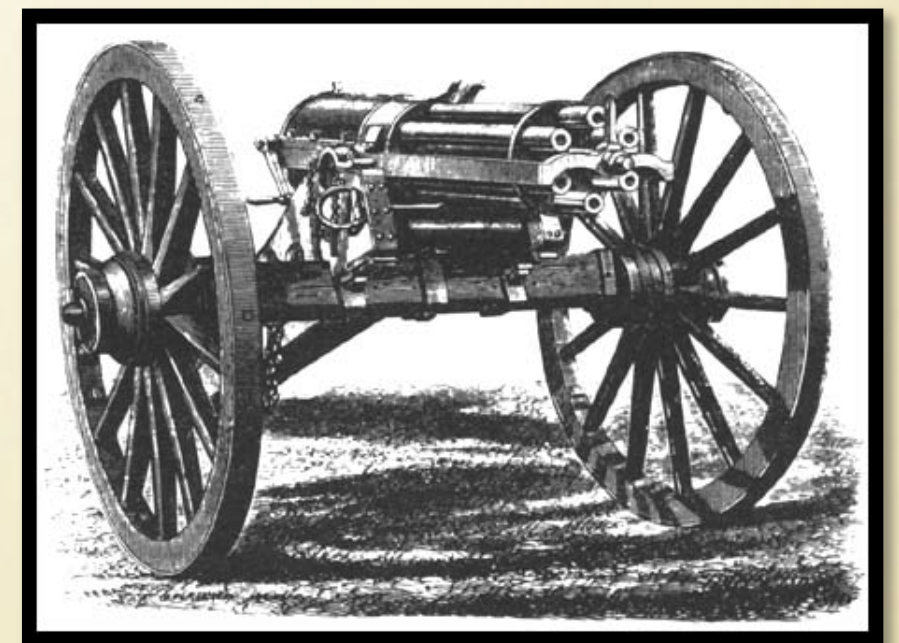
# HOW DID 19TH CENTURY EUROPEANS JUSTIFY THEIR EMPIRE BUILDING?



- This is an important question, because many of the governments by the 1880s are liberal governments that believe in (and guard) basic civil liberties among their populations, like the right to vote (although not every country has universal manhood suffrage yet), freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, religion, etc.
- How can these kinds of governments justify their actions in Africa, where they are stripping millions of people of the most basic rights?
- The speech that I asked you to read by Jules Ferry, which he ~~delivered before the French National~~ Assembly (their elected house of representatives) provides some insight into *how* an “Enlightened Nation” like France could justify subjugating and exploiting African populations.
- As you read through this short, but important document think about these questions:
  - What are the main reasons Jules Ferry thinks France *needs* an empire?
  - What 19th century themes are reflected in Ferry’s position?
  - Is there anything new here?

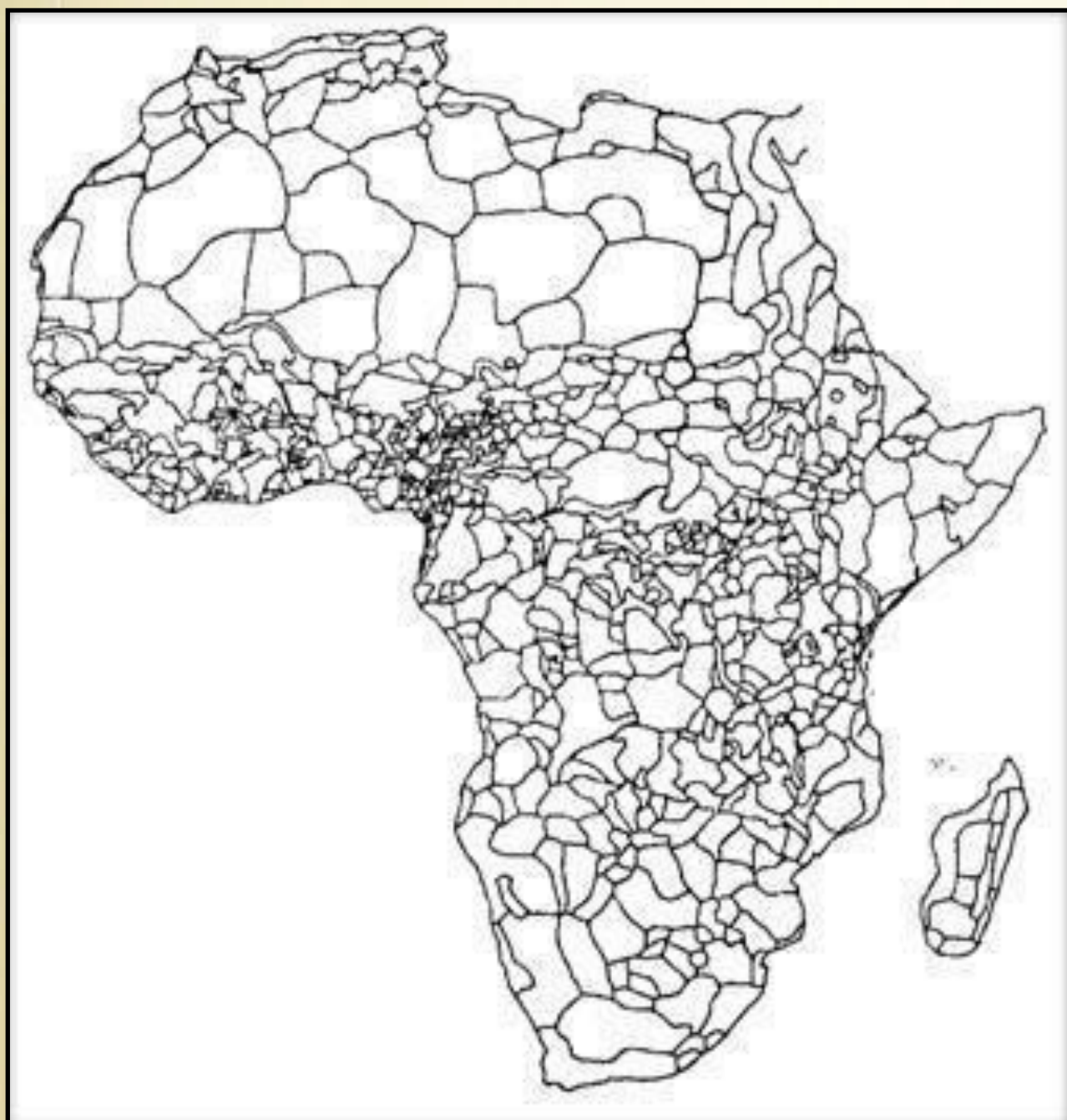
# DID AFRICAN POPULATIONS RESIST EUROPEAN POWER? (YES.)

- Resistance was ubiquitous (it happened everywhere), but was almost always unsuccessful because European weapons by the end of the 19th century had advanced and improved *so* dramatically as a result of the two industrial revolutions. They had modern technology like machine guns (Gatling guns), Maxim guns, which could fire rapidly without needing reloading, and dum-dum bullets, which exploded on impact.
- One British soldier fighting in Africa described war with African populations as “more like hunting than fighting.”
- An important exception to this rule was Ethiopia in 1894
  - Italy attempts to colonize Ethiopia in 1894 but lose the battle
  - African soldiers were armed by rifles provided the French and Russians
  - As a result, by 1914, Ethiopia is one of the few independent (uncolonized) African States.



# ADMINISTERING THE COLONIES

- Once colonies were established how were they run by European powers?
- Europeans established “**plunder economies**” in which they:
  - expropriated land from indigenous populations and used the soil to farm for their own profit
  - Exploited the local population for labor
  - Established complete control over natural resources
  - Blocked long-standing routes leading between colonies
  - Prevented commercial exchanges from which European merchants did not profit
  - Established a monopoly over manufactured goods in the colonies
  - Prevented production of anything that might compete with the colonizing country’s industry (as we saw earlier with England in India)
  - Imposed taxes on the population
- Europeans are also obsessed with fixing exact boundaries of their colonies.
  - They create **new maps** that reflect European interests and have absolutely nothing to do with longstanding relationships between African populations.
  - Look at the two maps on the next slide. The map on the left recreates existing political boundaries in African *before* European colonization and the second reflects the new borders set by Europeans. What do you notice? Do the two sets of boundaries have anything in common?



# HOW PROFITABLE WERE COLONIES FOR EUROPE?

- So, were colonies the “millstone” around Europe’s neck, as Benjamin Disraeli described in 1852, or were they the “magnificent cake” of the 1880s?
- It is undeniable that one of the **main motivations** for imperialism was making money.
- Colonies *did* provide a lot of **raw materials**, things like rubber, cotton, palm oil, ivory, peanuts, diamonds, and gold.
- Many of these things (especially rubber) were extremely valuable in Europe by the end of the 19th century.
- Colonies were also supposed to act as **new markets** for European exports (since the European market was getting saturated by the end of the century)
- **But**, on the whole, Europeans did not do that much trade with Africa (or Asia).
  - Great Britain did more trade with Belgium than with the entire continent of Africa
  - In 1914 France *bought* more for its colonies than it sold back to them
- Moreover, **colonies were expensive** to maintain!
  - Europeans had to maintain a military and a colonial administration
  - Not every region in Africa was as rich in natural resources as places like the congo.
- A French politician in 1899 characterized Imperialism as having 2 distinct phases: 1. The Joy of Conquest and 2. The Arrival of the Bill.
- The economic consequences for colonized countries were **devastating**. Many regions rich in one particular resource (like the congo) were reduced to having their whole economy organized around that one resource.

# IF IMPERIALISM WASN'T \*THAT\* PROFITABLE, WHY DID EUROPEANS SUPPORT IT?

- The pursuit of profit was only one of several motivations for imperialism. Think back to Jules Ferry's speech. There was a lot more involved that motivated European governments to spend vast sums of money and resources on this venture, which was often **enthusiastically supported** by the general population in Europe.
- It's important to remember that Imperialism wasn't an isolated phenomenon. It was very much an extension of *other* 19th century European phenomena.
  - By the end of the 19th century, relations between European countries were getting tenser than they had been since the time of Napoleon the first at the very beginning of the century.
  - Acquiring colonies becomes a way to compete with one another without risking all-out conflict on the European continent.
- This is clearly also connected to that other major theme of the second half of the 19th century: **Nationalism**. As the 19th century German historian Heinrich von Treitschke wrote:

“Every virile people has established colonial power ... All great nations in the fullness of their strength have desired to set their mark upon barbarian lands and those who fail to participate in this great rivalry will play a pitiable role in the time to come.”
- Of course, as we race towards the 20th century, we also know that all who did choose to participate in “this great rivalry” were also dooming themselves to the largest and most all-encompassing conflict that the world had ever seen.

**IF IMPERIALISM WASN'T \*THAT\* PROFITABLE,  
WHY DID EUROPEANS SUPPORT IT?**