By 1889 France was ready to move deep into the African interior, to consolidate its hold on Senegambia, the upper Niger and the western Sudan, and in the east to converge on Lake Chad in the central Sudan from a number of directions. Once there, elements among French policy-makers planned to advance further eastwards into the eastern Sudan (the modern Sudan Republic) and establish a belt of French territory right across Africa by joining up with French interests in the Horn of Africa. France had also determined to tighten its hold on Madagascar and to prevent the British from increasing their influence there.

By 1889 Britain had not yet made any decision to take formal possession of the hinterlands of its coastal colonies in West Africa. By this time it had given up hope of an early withdrawal from Egypt in North Africa. It looked as if British policy of keeping the Russians out of the Mediterranean by bolstering Turkey would fail, and that Britain would have to fall back on Cairo for the defence of the Levant.

In the more northerly part of Central Africa lay King Leopold’s Congo Free State, the administration and exploitation of which had been transferred to concession companies. Leopold had ambitions to extend the borders of his personal state to the south and east, and in the latter direction he had plans for establishing an outlet on the Nile. The Portuguese had not advanced very far inland from Mozambique and Angola but had hopes of linking the two. Italy had an eye on Libya, but it was only in 1911 that it
made an obvious attempt to gain control of this country. It also had interests in the Horn of Africa and in the 1890s was planning to extend formal control deep into the interior at the expense of Ethiopia. Spain looked hopefully across the Straits of Gibraltar towards Morocco, but because of increasing French interests in the region and also British policy of supporting the independence of the kingdom, Spanish hopes were to remain just that.

The 1890s were therefore to see the European powers move into the interior of Africa from their coastal footholds. What was the situation there? In the last two chapters the focus has been so much on European motives and moves that it is easy to be lulled into thinking that this was the only partition. But it was not. The African peoples of the interior were not simply sitting in some timeless state of primitive 'being', waiting to be swallowed up by the advancing Europeans. The European partition of the continent was not the only partitioning process: there was also an African scramble for Africa. The African partition of the continent started before the European partition, and in some areas was still continuing at the time of the European scramble. From the late 1880s, but particularly in the 1890s, the two scrambles merged. In certain areas the European scramble interrupted the African scramble. It is not an easy task to define this scramble because almost any activity in the interior may be said to have contributed to the nature of the final partitioning of Africa. But certainly events that should be included are the Egyptian expansion in the Sudan and further south, as well as in the Horn of Africa, the Swahili-Arab penetration of the East African interior under the banner of the Omanis, the expansion of Shoa in Ethiopia, the Ngoni invasions across the Zambezi, and the Chokwe expansion. We may also include Fang expansion from southern Cameroon to Gabon and into Congo-Brazzaville. The jihad movements in West Africa and the Dyula(Mandinka) empire of Samory are also part of this 'African scramble for Africa'. Nor can we leave out of this African restructuring of the continent the secondary states that emerged and which were led by men such as Rabih, Mirambo, Msiri, Tippu Tip and Emin Pasha, to name but a few, or the activities of robber barons like Mlozi. We have already dealt with some of these states and empire builders in their appropriate geographical settings. Others will be mentioned in this chapter. The point is that, all too often in the past, European historians have acted as if African societies were in a state of petrification, in a permanent state of limbo, timeless and unchanging. If they were not thought of in that way, then their history was considered to be one long tale of internal struggles, faction fighting and wars against neighbours.

Although in this chapter we shall be concentrating on the establishment and expansion of large states, and the attempts of small states to increase their size, there is much truth in R. Oliver's statement that the African scramble for Africa 'was not a scramble for territory, but for those resources, including resources in human labour, which could be obtained by the use of force, especially the force of the gun'.

The concentration on large states should also not mislead us into believing that such states were typical of Africa or that the African scramble was necessarily leading to the creation of fewer, larger states. In some instances, as in the case of the Oyo empire in West Africa, the nineteenth century represented a disintegrating tendency. In the period
immediately following the liberation of African states from colonial rule in the 1960s, African historians were at pains to show that Africa, no less than Europe, did have large states and empires that were comparable in size and complexity to European states. In the enthusiasm to demonstrate that Africa was not, in this sense, lagging behind Europe or, more pertinently, inferior to Europe, African historians tended to neglect the many smaller polities and groups and the so-called stateless societies. It was only later that African historians came to give these small political and social units more attention, and to assert that, in many ways, these were more representative of Africa than the vast empires. Today it is widely recognised that most Africans prior to the colonial era did not live in these few large states, but in the many smaller entities. Huge states were the exception rather than the rule in Africa. The purpose of highlighting major political conglomerations in this chapter is to demonstrate that when the European scramble for the interior was joined in the 1890s, large areas of Africa had for some time experienced other scrambles, and that many Africans who came under European colonial rule had in the not so distant past come under the sway of other alien peoples.

EGYPTIAN EXPANSION

The African scramble for Africa took many forms. In North Africa it was the Egyptian state that embarked on a policy of expansion. Mohammed Ali invaded the Sudan in 1821. By the end of the year most of it was under his control, but in 1822 widespread rebellions broke out and it was only by the end of 1824 that reinforcements had succeeded in establishing Egyptian authority firmly. The Sudan was not taken over by Egyptians as we know them today, but by a Turkish-speaking body whose members had dominated Egypt since the Middle Ages. Mohammed Ali divided the Sudan into districts and provinces which were under the overall control of a governor-general stationed at the newly founded town of Khartoum at the junction of the White and Blue Nile. The main function of the administration was to facilitate the free flow of slaves northwards, and to swell the Egyptian coffers with tribute. Desire for recruits for his army played an important role in Mohammed Ali’s expansionist moves southwards. Virtually every year until 1838 raids for recruits were made, but the demand could not be satisfied. The Sudanese resisted vigorously. Hitherto they had not paid regular taxes, and were not at all pleased when the Turkish administrators extended the Egyptian system of taxation to the Sudan. The brutal manner in which the tax was collected exacerbated matters, and the Sudanese displeasure at the disruption to their economic life found expression in a number of revolts.

The Turkish imperialists who took over the Sudan brought about improvements in Sudanese agriculture, they extended irrigation systems, introduced new crops and were active in combating pests and plagues. But all this was done not to develop the Sudan, but to increase the production of goods sent to Egypt. Egypt exploited the Sudan and among other articles, indigo, gum and ivory went north to Egypt. In addition, the Sudan was Egypt’s cheapest source of livestock.

As in Egypt, Mohammed Ali initially monopolised exports from the Sudan. But in the 1840s he was forced to open up the ivory trade of the upper White Nile to European
merchants after the defeat of the Shilluks had given Egypt access to the large elephant herds of the southern Sudan. European firms which had established themselves in Khartoum sent traders southwards down the navigable Nile in search of ivory. Initially it was easy to obtain ivory close to the river, and traders either shot elephants themselves or exchanged tusks with the local inhabitants for beads. But this could not last for long. Elephants became scarce in the vicinity of the river, while the locals soon had more beads than they knew what to do with. Hunters had to move further afield in search of ivory.

Although European merchants played a prominent role in opening up the White Nile and Bahr al-Ghazal to trade, it was not long before Cairo-based European firms engaged Arabs to collect slaves and ivory. The Arabs were set up in fortified camps, called zeribas, from which they conducted their raids. From the 1850s the search for ivory led to raids in the interior. Within a few years both the upper White Nile and its western tributary, the Bahr al-Ghazal, were notorious for the abuses committed by traders and their followers. The Arabs discovered that the Nilotic pastoralists wanted cattle in exchange for ivory and slaves. The Arabs thus organised raids to obtain cattle with which to barter. Cattle were also obtained in the form of taxes. Those who could not pay their taxes in cattle often paid in slaves. Some of these traders became very powerful merchant princes, with trading stations, large administrative staffs and private armies of slaves. The Sudanese al-Zubayr Rahma Mansur in the Bahr al-Ghazal was one of these. Many of the slaves taken in this region went to Cairo and also eastwards across the Nubian desert to Damascus and Mecca; Suakin on the Red Sea became an important harbour for the distribution of slaves across the Red Sea to Arabia, India and the Far East. Most of the ivory taken here found its way to Zanzibar.

Mohammed Ali’s grandson, Ismail, was also a great expansionist. He had dreams of making Egypt the head of a great African empire. In 1869 he commissioned the British explorer Sir Samuel Baker to go down the White Nile to take measures against the slave trade and to open up a trade route that would divert the East African ivory from Zanzibar to Cairo. He was appointed governor of any new territory he annexed to the south of the Sudan in what became known as Equatoria. Baker tackled these tasks with enthusiasm and even made an unsuccessful bid to bring Bunyoro in East Africa into the Egyptian fold. Unfortunately tact was not one of Baker’s strong points and he alienated the local inhabitants of the Sudan as well as the Arab slave dealers.

In 1874 Baker was succeeded by Charles Gordon, another Englishman, who was keen to extend Egyptian rule to the great lakes of East Africa. He tried to bring Bunyoro under Egyptian rule, but with no greater success, and in 1876 he resigned. In 1877 Ismail again took Gordon into his service as governor-general of the whole Sudan with his headquarters at Khartoum. Gordon fought the slave trade with tremendous energy and fervour but his measures caused much resistance and in 1879 Ismail requested him to resign. Baker and Gordon had done little more than establish a few scattered posts in Equatoria, and Gordon’s successor, the German Edouard Carl Oscar Theodor Schnitzer (better known in history as Emin Pasha), was unable to strengthen the administration.
As in Egypt, modernisation also came to the Sudan in the form of telegraph lines and by the 1860s there was a fairly large fleet of steamers in Sudanese waters. In fact the steamer, together, of course, with firearms, played a major role in the southward expansion, helping to overcome the resistance of the people and also the obstruction of the Sudd barrier, which blocked the approach both to the equatorial Nile and the Bahr al-Ghazal.

When the Egyptian advance reached the Bahr al-Ghazal, it came up against the region’s biggest slave trader, al-Zubayr Rahma Mansur, who had built a large empire for himself. Ismail decided that the best policy would be to befriend Zubayr and in 1873 he made him governor of Bahr al-Ghazal. Ismail later arrested Zubayr and tried to break his power, but in this he was unsuccessful. The people of the Bahr al-Ghazal rallied around Zubayr’s son Sulayman. Ismail succeeded in inflicting a military defeat on them, but he could not make his rule effective, and when the Mahdist forces in 1883 became a rallying point for the Sudanese against foreign rulers, the chiefs of the Bahr al-Ghazal cooperated with the Mahdi to overthrow rule from Cairo.

Ismail realised that, with the opening of the Suez Canal, the Red Sea would become more important and so he extended his activities to the Red Sea and Somali coast; he also had designs on Ethiopia. In 1865 the ports of Suakin and Massawa were ceded to Egypt by the Ottoman sultan. Massawa was an island off the Red Sea coast with an excellent harbour. In the nineteenth century there was a continual battle for control of Massawa between the Ottoman empire, Egypt, the rulers of Tigré, and a local noble family. In 1813–1814 Mohammed Ali seized it on behalf of the Ottoman sultan, but he was soon forced to withdraw; he retook it in 1833, withdrew once again in 1841 and regained it in 1846 for a period of some three years. In 1865 the sultan permitted Ismail to take it over. This placed the Egyptians in a good position to control imports into Tigré in the north of Ethiopia.

In 1875 and 1876 Ismail occupied Berbera and Zeila on the Somali coast and Harar, which was further inland; he also decided on a major assault on Ethiopia. But this proved disastrous for him. Attacks launched on Ethiopia in 1875 and 1876 were repulsed and the Egyptian invading forces were virtually annihilated.

All thought of further expansion was shelved as problems in Egypt itself increased. So, far from embarking on further expansion, Egypt was soon to lose its own independence. Britain inherited Egypt’s colonies, but while it regarded its stay in Egypt as temporary it did not intend taking vigorous action in the Sudan. So when the revolt led by the Mahdi succeeded in winning over virtually the whole of the Sudan in 1883, the British decided to evacuate it. Only in Equatoria did Emin Pasha, who had built up a considerable following since he had been appointed governor in 1877, hold on, becoming the leader of a nascent state.
ETHIOPIA AND THE HORN OF AFRICA

In northeast Africa there was significant state-building in what is modern Ethiopia. The geography of Ethiopia with its high mountains and deep ravines helped to isolate it from European influences, as did the fact that it was of no strategic importance either to Britain or to France. Egypt and Italy did, indeed, have designs on Ethiopia, but by the time that the challenge from these quarters gained serious momentum, much progress had been made towards unifying the divided states that occupied the region, and the rulers of a new unified Ethiopia were able to repulse threats from these quarters. So far from becoming part of a foreign empire, Ethiopia actually participated in the scramble for Africa, engaging in a programme of expansion.

But little of this late nineteenth-century strength was evident around 1800, when Ethiopia was still weak and divided, and very unsettled. In the Christian core of the country there were a number of independent states. The most powerful of these was Tigre, situated in the north, in the heartland of the old kingdom of Axum. It was mainly a Christian state but in the south and east there were large Muslim populations. Because it was close to the coast, it had the best access to firearms, which it obtained from Massawa.

It was the state of Shoa in the southeast, centred on the modern city of Addis Ababa, that was to be so successful in restructuring northeast Africa and participating in the scramble for Africa. Christians predominated in the highlands but the south and west was in the hands of Galla (Oromo) traditionalists and Muslims. Warlords and princes fought one another in bitter struggles. Shoa had firm economic ties with the Gulf of Aden, importing goods through the ports of Tajurah and Zeila; it also conducted a large trade with the inland, independent walled Muslim city of Harar.

In the early part of the century the biggest threat to the region came from Egypt, and as early as 1821 Egyptian soldiers from the Sudan penetrated into the western borderlands in search of gold. In the late 1820s the Egyptians made slave-raiding forays into Ethiopia. The Egyptian threat from the Sudan continued sporadically into the 1870s. On the coast Europeans were establishing spheres of influence and enclaves. Britain occupied Aden in 1839, and in the 1840s Britain and France opened consulates in Massawa. In 1862 the French acquired Obok, and in 1869 an Italian shipping company purchased Assab from a local sultan. Although the Europeans were obtaining footholds on the coast, prior to the opening up of the Suez Canal they did not do much to consolidate their holdings or to penetrate the interior. Except for expansion into the hinterland of Massawa by the Italians, expansion inland by Europe was largely a post-1880 phenomenon.

In 1855 Kassa, who had emerged as one of the strongest and most successful of the many robber bands on the northwest frontier of Ethiopia, had himself crowned by the abuna (head of the church) as the Negusa Negast (King of Kings) in Tigre. He took the name Tewodros II. He may be regarded as the father of modern Ethiopia in the sense that he conceived the idea of a strong united Ethiopia and took steps to bring this about. He believed that he was destined to revive the Ethiopian nation, and he did much to
unite the country and to give it a centralised government. He realised that the country could be controlled only by military means and so he created a well-organised army to support him. He did have some trouble importing enough arms, however, as the Egyptians in the Sudan and the Turks at Massawa prevented arms from going to him. The aim of any modernising that he undertook was to move his army more quickly, for example by obtaining European craftsmen to make roads. He reduced the power of the various princes and embarked on a programme of internal reform. But local ties and traditions were very strong and the rigid centralised government that he introduced alienated many influential churchmen and nobles. The princes were unhappy at the reduction of their power, while the ordinary people objected to the heavy tax burden that was placed on them.

Revolts

Revolts and resistance were breaking out all the time, and Tewodros spent most of his reign fighting against rebels and rivals. By 1865 the greater part of the kingdom was in revolt. His cruelty, drunkenness and increasing signs of mental derangement did not help matters. By 1867 his army had begun to disintegrate and although the immediate cause of his downfall was foreign intervention, by this time it was clear that he had failed to reunify Ethiopia. Although there were many reasons for his downfall, his attempt to provide additional money for his reform programme by taxing church lands played a significant role in the opposition to him. As in the case of the Egyptian rulers, Tewodros needed a large amount of money if he hoped to establish a national army and a central administration. His attempts to reduce the number of clergy and to confiscate certain church lands and distribute them to tax-paying farmers met with great resistance from the church and they helped mobilise public opinion against him.

Defeat of Tewodros

Thus when the British despatched a large force to ‘rescue’ a British consul arrested by Tewodros in a minor dispute, the Emperor had little local support and was easily overcome by the British, who allied themselves with Johannes IV, one of his rivals. Tewodros was defeated, and he committed suicide as the invaders stormed his capital of Magdala.

Johannes

With British arms and support, Johannes was crowned emperor in 1872, and by prudently allowing the provincial rulers to retain most of their privileges he persuaded them to accept him as emperor. During his period of rule Ethiopia was threatened by Egypt, the Italians and the Mahdists of the Sudan. Although he succeeded in warding off all these threats, the Egyptian occupation of the Red Sea and Somali ports prevented Johannes from obtaining arms. Massawa had once again come into Egyptian hands in the second half of the 1860s, and they stopped the export of arms into Ethiopia. Access to arms played an important role in building up and restricting the power of the various contending forces and this problem fatally weakened Johannes in his struggle against Menelik, the young Shoa ruler in the south, who was putting in a strong bid to challenge him for the position of emperor.

Menelik

Menelik was building up a large and well-equipped army with firearms bought from the French and Italian traders on the coast. The money to buy the arms came from the increase in the demand for slaves from the region. Early in the nineteenth century, when
Egypt

defeated

Egyptian expansion continued. Its attempt to take over northern Ethiopia was frustrated when an army of some 70,000 men, assembled by Johannes, crushed an Egyptian force at Gundat in November 1875. Ismail assembled a well-equipped army of 20,000 in a revenge attack. But over 200,000 men responded to Emperor Johannes's call and the Egyptian force was annihilated in 1876. The Ethiopians captured 16 cannon, and about 12,000 rifles and vast quantities of ammunition and other supplies.

Truce between Johannes and Menelik

While this Egyptian threat was still hanging over his head, in 1875 Johannes triumphed in a clash with Menelik, but was forced to accept a weak truce because of the danger that existed from the Egyptians in the north. A large-scale war between Tigre and Shoa seemed likely but neither Johannes nor Menelik was willing to push the matter to extremes and a compromise was reached in which Menelik renounced the title of emperor and Johannes recognised Menelik's independence subject to the payment of tax.

So by 1880 Ethiopia was united and at peace. The Egyptian threat from the Sudan was soon to be replaced by a threat from the Mahdi, however. Egyptian domination of the Somali coast along the Gulf of Aden was also about to end, as the European powers made their presence there more effective. In the 1890s effective European control in the Horn of Africa was still limited to the coast. The British were laying the basis for what became British Somaliland. Djibouti, in the French sphere, had become a centre of importance in the firearms trade and as a coaling station for French ships bound for the East. In 1885 Britain had allowed the Italians to take over the former Egyptian Red Sea port of Massawa. They did so because they believed that Germany was preparing to move in there; the British, who did not want it themselves, preferred to have the weaker Italians there. British support for Italy in other places on the coast provided the Italians with firm bases from which to move inland. Italian explorers went into the interior and signed treaties, thus enlarging the Italian sphere of what was to become Italian Somaliland. Their position in the interior remained precarious, however.

Ethiopian expansion

Ethiopia was showing more vigour in expanding its domain in the interior than the Europeans were in expanding inland from the coast. This is why it is often said that Ethiopia itself participated in the scramble. In the course of the 1880s, Menelik advanced northwards from his base in Shoa with the aid of modern guns he had bought from Italian agents. He conquered the pagan Galla to the west and south of Shoa and also moved eastwards. When Emperor John died in 1889, Menelik was by far the
strongest of the local rulers, and with the help of the Italians, who were interfering more and more in the affairs of Ethiopia, he was crowned emperor.

Treaty of Wichale

After being crowned emperor, in May 1889 Menelik signed the Treaty of Wichale, which defined the boundary between Ethiopia and Italian Eritrea, with Italy. There was a difference of opinion between the Ethiopians and the Italians as to the interpretation of the treaty, with the latter insisting that Menelik had agreed to the establishment of an Italian protectorate. Menelik denied this, and in 1893 he roundly condemned the Treaty of Wichale. The Italian prime minister, Francesco Crispi, was a fiery nationalist, and he had a dream of creating a massive northeast African empire for Italy by linking Eritrea with the Italian possessions on the coast of Somaliland. He was determined to make effective the protectorate which, he insisted, had been recognised by Menelik in the Treaty of Wichale.

Battle of Adowa

By 1895 Menelik had a well-equipped army of 100,000 men. But as with many African armies of the time, the logistical problems of feeding them on the march were considerable, so that an army of this size could not stay long in the field. The Italians could therefore have exercised a little patience and waited for this formidable force to begin to disintegrate and disperse of its own accord. But they were not prepared to play a waiting game. After the Italian forces suffered a minor reverse in December 1895, Crispi applied increasing pressure on his commanders to present him with a major victory. The Italians advanced and on 1 March 1896 there was a clash close to the town of Adowa. The Ethiopians succeeded in splitting up the three Italian brigades and separating them so that they could attack them individually. The Italian army was crushed and in the course of a single morning history was made - a European power had suffered a major defeat at the hands of an indigenous polity. For Menelik the victory brought great prestige.

Claims in Ogaden recognised

Menelik did not follow up his victory at Adowa, and diverted his attention instead to the borders of the Sudan in the west, and to the Galla country, north of Lake Rudolph, in the south; to the east he drove a wedge of Ethiopian territory into Somali lands in the Ogaden. Ethiopian claims to parts of the Ogaden were recognised by Britain, France and Italy in treaties concluded between 1897 and 1908. Thus Ethiopia participated in the scramble for Africa.

External factors in Ethiopia's unification

If we look at Ethiopia in terms of internal and external events and stimuli, the impetus to build a united state in Ethiopia undoubtedly came from within, but Europe obviously played a role in providing the means to do so. Access to arms was crucial in warding off threats to Ethiopia from Egypt and the Sudan and in conquering foreign rivals and putting down rebellions. International trade also played a role, and the slave trade gave Menelik the opportunity of collecting the funds with which to purchase arms. The threat, as Menelik and Johannes saw it, came from the Turco-Egyptians and Islam, not from Europe. In fact they wished to align themselves with Europe, whom they saw not in terms of Europe but in terms of being Christians. Although Tewodros needed more finance to keep his big and well-equipped army in the field, because of Ethiopia's
isolation he did not have the same access as Egypt did to European lines of credit. His attempts to use the church as milch cow and provide the means were self-defeating.

SECONDARY EMPIRES IN EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

In East and Central Africa an African scramble for Africa preceded the European partitioning. The Omani presence dominated events in this part of Africa. It had a major impact on the relationships that developed in the interior and also on relationships with the European powers in the nineteenth century. One immediate difference between most of the states discussed in this chapter and the Omani state is that the latter had its centre on the East African coast, whereas most of the others essentially had their bases in the interior of the continent. In East Africa European traders took longer to reach the interior than they did in West Africa, and until well into the late nineteenth century the most visible presence of Europe in East Central Africa was that of the Protestant missions.

The only major states in this region were in the vicinity of the Great Lakes, where Buganda was expanding its influence and power. Bugandan restructuring was interrupted by the British in the early 1890s.

The African scramble was a scramble for resources, including human resources, not for territory. And in the husbanding of these resources, firearms played a crucial role. We have already hinted at how important a supply of modern firearms was for the empire-building of a leader such as Menelik, and in chapter 4 we saw the role this played in the rise of the secondary empires such as Msiri’s empire in Katanga and Tippu Tip’s between the Lualaba and the Lomani. It was because they had mostly been built upon the shifting sands of the supply of arms that the secondary empires in Africa were fundamentally unstable. Dominance in an area could be lost to neighbours who suddenly gained access to large numbers of arms, or subordinates, having acquired substantial hordes of arms, could break away from the empire.

Between them the Swahili-Arabs, the Chokwe, and rulers such as Mirambo, Msiri and Tippu Tip, were responsible for bringing about major changes in East and Central Africa, building up new states and undermining old empires. When the Europeans penetrated into the East and Central African interior, these secondary states played a major role in resisting the extension of formal European control.

The European and African scrambles converged. The expansion of Tippu Tip’s empire was stopped by the desire of Leopold to expand the borders of his Congo Free State further eastwards. When Stanley arrived at Kasongo on his way down the Congo River to the Atlantic, Tippu Tip sent an escort and thus used the opportunity to extend his authority down the Luapula River, reaching Stanley Falls by 1882. But after 1884 he was in competition with the Congo state of Leopold, and while the Belgians were out-maneuvering him, they appointed him governor of the eastern Congo. When the Germans were facing a rebellion in German East Africa from 1888, they set up a blockade mainly to prevent arms reaching the rebels. Leopold cooperated with Bismarck, but he had his own reason for doing so, which was to stop the arms trade as a
way of gaining as much control over Tippu Tip as he could. He therefore confiscated consignments of arms destined for Tippu Tip and banned the sales of arms and ammunition on the upper river and its tributaries. Leopold represented these measures as steps to combat the slave trade. In the meantime Congo officials were competing with Tippu Tip’s men for slave supplies.

Tippu Tip retired to the coast in 1891, and in 1892 the local Belgian officer made a concerted attack on the strongholds of Tippu’s empire, which were finally reduced after some eighteen months of bitter fighting. Leopold represented the war between the Arabs and the Free State as a war against the slave trade, but his real aim was to expand eastwards.

**Msiri**

Another state that had been responsible for some considerable restructuring in the Central Africa interior, and which fell prey to the ambitions of Leopold, was the predatory state founded by Msiri. When the British South Africa Company, which had been founded in 1890, started to show interest in Msiri’s Garenganze kingdom, which was disintegrating, Leopold decided to take action and sent an expedition there in 1891. Msiri’s empire fell to the Belgians in 1891 and Msiri himself was shot by a Belgian officer after he refused to fly the Congo Free State’s flag over his capital. The officer was immediately killed by one of Msiri’s sons. The Anglo-Portuguese treaty of 1894 accepted the Free State’s control of Katanga and the border between modern Zambia and Zaire was fixed.

**Chokwe**

The opportunities afforded by the demand for ivory played a large role in the rise of the Chokwe as a power of some significance in West Central Africa. It was the availability of firearms in the second half of the nineteenth century that enabled the Chokwe to become so strong. During the 1880s they overran the whole of Lunda territory. The Chokwe had to face both the Congo Free State and the Portuguese as they penetrated into the interior. By the 1890s they were engaged in fierce fighting with the Congo Free State. The Chokwe territory eventually came under the control of the Portuguese but for some years into the twentieth century the Chokwe retained a good deal of freedom from colonial control. The Chokwe, Ovambo, Kongo and Ovimbundu defied Portuguese tax collectors. One of the reasons that they could do so was that the boom in rubber from 1890 to 1905 enabled them to buy guns from Portuguese traders. When the rubber trade collapsed in 1910, and the sale of arms to Africans was banned in 1912, Portugal, for the first time, was able to make its authority felt throughout Angola. The Portuguese finally succeeded in subduing them only in the 1920s, and even after that they continued expanding, albeit peacefully, into the Congo and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia).

**Mlozi and the African Lakes Company**

These are but a few examples of secondary states and changes that may be regarded as African-inspired restructuring. Thus one could regard the operations of Mlozi in the Lake Nyasa area as an attempt to establish his hegemony over the broken groups in the region and to create a large raiding state. In June 1884 the African Lakes Company established a station at Karonga, to the west of Lake Nyasa, near its northern end. A Swahili half-caste by the name of Mlozi established a raiding state in the area, and by
late 1887 he had a number of fortified villages from which his gangs sallied out to capture slaves forcibly, wreaking havoc and devastation in the process. In order to maintain itself the company had to fortify its station. The company refused to recognise Mlozi as the ruler in the area, and gave sanctuary to his victims, thus setting itself up as a rival force.

Mlozi's defeat

The British government refused to intervene decisively. Had the African Lakes Company been stronger, like the Niger Company, the government might have placed responsibility in its hands, but it was poor and badly managed. The war between Mlozi and the company dragged on. Lugard was brought in to take charge of military operations against the slavers, but he returned to England without being able to bring the war to an end. Mlozi's efforts were to founder not as a result of African resistance, but because of the appearance on the scene of Harry Johnston. In the second half of 1889 Johnston made treaties with the chiefs west of Lake Nyasa and he succeeded in bringing the war with Mlozi to an end, although it took him somewhat longer to break the robber baron's power. At the end of 1895 Mlozi's power was finally destroyed and he was killed.

THE INDIGENOUS STATES OF THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL SUDAN

The Sudan or bilad al-Sudan, as the Arab geographers and historians of classical times called it (meaning the 'land of the black people') was an area of great mobility and mixture of population. There were major urban centres and large rural populations, pastoral nomads and settled agriculturists; Muslims and those who adhered to traditional beliefs lived side by side with freemen and large slave populations in this melting pot that was hemmed in by the Sahara desert in the north and the forest region in the south. In the early nineteenth century there was some major state-building in this region, largely as the result of a number of holy wars or jihads which had as their aim the reform of Islamic practices and the establishment of states run in accordance with Islamic law.

Fulbe

There was one ethnic group in the Sudan that was very different from the others because they were mobile pastoralists. They were the Fulbe (called Fulani by the British in the nineteenth century). Some people believe that they were originally Saharan pastoralists who migrated towards the west along the southern fringes of the desert. They eventually settled astride the middle Senegal valley. Some gave up their pastoral ways and became part of the Tukolor in Futa Toro, where they adopted Islam. But other Fulbe preserved their traditional paganism and slowly moved into other areas. By the fifteenth century there was a large number of them in the Futa Jallon highlands and in the region of Masina, the inland delta of the Niger, upstream of Timbuktu. They were also to be found in Hausaland, and by the sixteenth century there were Fulbe in Borno; by the eighteenth century there were a large number of them in Cameroon. What is interesting about this migration is that, except for Futa Toro and Futa Jallon, the Fulbe did not take over or even mix with the people among whom they settled. They remained distinct communities, exchanging a few products with the agriculturists, but did not otherwise participate in events. In due course, however, some Fulbe did give
up their pastoral way of life, and moved to the growing urban centres, where they were converted to Islam.

**Conversion to Islam**

Fulbe isolation from the communities in which they lived may help to explain why, over a period of time, many of them converted to Islam, which gave Fulbe everywhere a sense of unity. The Fulbe in Futa Toro and Futa Jallon kept contact with the rural wandering Fulbe and with the Fulbe in the cities. The result of this was that when the urban Fulbe in the eighteenth century began to reorganise West African society into something approaching a Muslim theocracy, the revolution spread very quickly.

By the eighteenth century, although Islam was widely spread over West Africa, it was principally the religion of the cities and did not have strong roots in the countryside. An important fact to remember about Islam is that it is a comprehensive religion that is concerned with every aspect of society. It has its own laws, usages and morals, its own rules for the organisation of the state. But, because they were in a minority in the Hausa states in which they settled, the Muslims could not give full expression to this Islamic way of life and this resulted in a feeling of frustration among many, although by no means all Muslims. Muslims in the cities, frequently being better educated than most of the population, often held high positions in the administration, and looked down on the locals, who returned the compliment by remaining suspicious and resentful of the immigrants, whom they did not readily accept. In most of the Sudan there existed a sort of ‘mixed Islamic’ society, where Islam and traditional religious customs and practices existed side by side.

The Muslims themselves were divided about what they wanted. On the one side there were the radical reformers who wanted to see the state run along Muslim lines and for whom there was no compromise. On the other side there were those Muslims who were doing very well for themselves as scribes, counsellors and administrators in the courts of the Hausa rulers. They did not want the status quo disturbed.

Muslim merchants were very much in demand by local rulers and they too were content to put up with non-Islamic practices and did not want any change. By the early nineteenth century Hausa traders monopolised much of the long-distance trade of the central Sudan. They exported products such as potash, leather goods, salt, textiles, livestock and slaves, and imported kola nuts from Asante, and textiles from Yorubaland. Lancashire cottons came to Kano from both the Atlantic coast and the north, as did European firearms. The Hausa were active in re-exporting both. They also re-exported cowries which arrived from the Yoruba towns.

But although the Muslim merchants involved in this flourishing trade did not want to change the status quo, in the end they did not have much say in it. In the second half of the eighteenth century a great surge of Islamic fundamentalism swept Arabia and was transferred to the western Sudan. In due course, a number of religious orders were established whose aim it was to reform Islam. In order to do so they often engaged in jihads, or holy wars. The jihads of the eighteenth century and the larger ones of the nineteenth century were the result of a desire to revive Islam in its purest form. The Fulbe in Futa Jallon rebelled against their rulers in 1725, and declared an imamate, a
state governed in accordance with Islamic law. Their example was followed in Futa Toro where Muslim Tukolor and Fulbe engaged in a successful jihad between 1769 and 1776.

In the early nineteenth century there were a series of jihads in the Hausa states; these jihads resulted in the formation of the caliphate or empire of Sokoto, a province of modern Nigeria, bounded in the north by the Niger River and to the west by Dahomey (the modern state of Benin). It all began in the rural areas with a reform movement that expressed its discontent in a peaceful manner. At first the aim of the reform movement was to spread Islamic education more widely in the rural areas, but after about 1788 it aimed at establishing autonomous communities of its own on the borders of the Hausa states. This was not popular with local authorities since it deprived them of jurisdiction over some of their subjects. The situation worsened as escaped slaves joined these autonomous communities and, having been converted to Islam, were protected against recapture. Local authorities reacted by attacking Fulbe pastoralists, enslaving them and seizing their cattle. This was done presumably in a bid to get the reformists, most of whom spoke the Fulbe language, to stop their activities. This tactic had the opposite effect, however, and drove the pastoralists further into the reformists’ camp. The Hausa slaves supported the reformists, who, although they were slave owners, did not enslave fellow Muslims or their nomadic kin. The Hausa had no such scruples. So their slaves had good reasons for joining the jihads.

The above was by no means the only source of friction between the Fulbe pastoralists and the settled farmers. There were tensions that had been simmering for a very long time. The Fulbe pastoralists, both Muslim and non-Muslim, welcomed the attacks of the reformists on the government, as they were particularly resentful of Hausa taxation of their herds. In their search for water and grazing, in dry seasons the Fulbe pastoralists would pasture their cattle on farmlands, which would naturally enough annoy the farmers, especially, as frequently happened, if this occurred while they were still harvesting their crops. When the Fulbe pastoralists brought their cattle close to the agricultural settlements, they also came within the range of local urban authorities, who taxed them and restricted them in the use of water and grazing. They had to pay fines for damage to crops. In the rainy season they had other problems when they moved their cattle to drier areas, for here they came into contact with the Tuareg, who were not happy to have to share their water resources with the Fulbe. The Tuaregs raided Fulbe cattle, and in times of drought or famine such depredations increased.

The leader of the jihad that resulted in the establishment of the Sokoto empire was Usman dan Fodio, a Fulbe of the Torodbe clan. He was born in 1754 in Gobir, a Hausa state which was a Fulbe stronghold. Having spent some years studying under well-known teachers at Agades, in the 1770s he began preaching in Gobir. He had two main aims: to convert those Fulbe pastoralists who had not yet converted to Islam, and to reform those who were nominally Muslims but who were in ‘mixed situations’ and who tolerated all sorts of non-Muslim practices within their spheres of influence in the courts of the Hausa rulers. At first he hoped that he would be able to achieve this by peaceful
means through his preaching, but as time went by he became increasingly frustrated and impatient at his lack of success.

Although he gained the support of the pastoral Fulbe, the core of his movement comprised the educated Fulbe and Muslim Hausa of the towns, who had very little time for the ruling elite. On their side the Hausa resented the growing power of the Fulbe in their midst. The Gobir rulers became increasingly concerned at dan Fodio’s popularity. He became tutor to Yunfa, and, involving himself in politics, was instrumental in having Yunfa appointed to the throne of Gobir in 1801. In 1803, when Usman dan Fodio set free a number of Muslim slaves that Yunfa had intended to sell and refused to deliver them up to him, the latter moved against his former tutor. Dan Fodio withdrew, and was joined by both Fulbe and Hausa. He was proclaimed Commander of the Faithful, which was the traditional title of the caliphs, the successors of the Prophet. A jihad was declared in 1804. Gobir fell quickly and Fulbe throughout Hausaland revolted against their rulers. Katsina fell in 1807 and Kano yielded in 1809.

The jihad of Usman dan Fodio was not a centralised operation conducted by a coordinated effort from the centre. It was more in the nature of a series of small jihads, in which Muslims acted against their local rulers. When the jihad started, a Fulbe clan leader would join the movement and fight his own ‘holy war’, oust the ruler and become the local emir, within what was to become the Sokoto caliphate.

The Hausa rulers were defeated partly because they were unable to muster any support for themselves. They had so oppressed the Hausa peasantry that no help was forthcoming from this sector. At the same time divisions between the Hausa rulers had been endemic for centuries, so there was no question of them being able to unite to fight the common enemy.

The whole of Hausaland was now in dan Fodio’s hands and he organised the seven Hausa states into one big kingdom or caliphate, replacing the ruling dynasties with Fulbe emirs. After his success dan Fodio retired from the political scene, returning to more scholarly pursuits, and established himself in the newly created Sokoto, which became the headquarters of the Sokoto empire. He handed the leadership reins to his brother Abdullah and his son Mohammed Bello. He went back to teaching and lived quietly until his death in 1817.

The jihad was pursued under Abdullah and Mohammed, particularly to the south and east. In the south, Nupe came under the control of the caliphate, the Niger River was crossed, and the Ilorin province of the disintegrating Oyo empire was incorporated into the Sokoto empire. To the east, western Borno was taken and Adamwa added to the empire.

The internal political and administrative organisation of Sokoto was the work of Mohammed Bello, who died in 1837. He divided the caliphate into 15 emirates, each with an emir with wide powers of control. Each of the Muslim emirates in the Sokoto caliphate ordered its own local affairs. The emirs paid an annual visit to the capital to demonstrate their loyalty to the caliph and to pay their tribute, but apart from this the
Sokoto empire soon settled down into the same sort of economic pattern as the states it had replaced. But the stability brought to the region was to provide the impetus for a major economic boom unparalleled since the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries.

Reforms

Although the states now had new Fulbe rulers, this did not make such a big difference, as they increasingly adopted Hausa customs and language. But they were not so corrupt, and adherence to the precepts of Islamic law meant that justice was more evenly dispensed. Literacy also spread. The wars that had plagued the Hausa states were brought to an end by the unifying influence of Islam. It was largely the new Fulbe role of rulers rather than religious reformers that was responsible for spreading Islam from the towns into the country areas. The jihads brought Hausaland firmly into Islam. M. Hiskett’s conclusion is that the reform movement ‘resulted in a decisive change of direction that swung Hausa society, firmly and explicitly, into the orbit of the Islamic world, where previously it had hovered uncertainly on the fringe’.4

Protectorate of Northern Nigeria

It was not an easy task to rule this empire, and Hausa resistance flared up continuously. There were also attacks from outside, from Borno and from the Tuaregs of the desert. But Sokoto remained intact until taken over by Britain at the end of the nineteenth century. The two most southerly provinces of the Sokoto caliphate, Nupe and Ilorin, were, in terms of the charter granted to the Royal Niger Company, placed within its sphere of influence. But the Company was unable to make its administration effective here and its failure to do so played an important role in the decision by Joseph Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary, to revoke the charter. On 1 January 1900 the British government assumed direct responsibility for the protectorate of Northern Nigeria.

Borno and the jihad

In the northeast the jihad of dan Fodio and members of his family was halted in Borno, west of Lake Chad. At the end of the eighteenth century there was a great deal of restlessness among the large number of Fulbe in Borno, who chafed against the subordinate position they held in the state. The success of dan Fodio encouraged them to take up arms against their rulers in 1808. They enjoyed some initial success, and the western regions of Borno were taken and added to the Sokoto caliphate. But further progress was halted when the local Saifawa ruler called upon the help of Mohammed al-Kanemi, a Muslim intellectual and religious leader who had been born in the Fezzan. With a band of fanatical supporters he organised resistance, at the same time protesting to the caliph of Sokoto that, as Borno was already an Islamic state, there was no reason for a jihad against it. Apart from this, many of its inhabitants were unwilling to accept Fulbe domination, and this provided another rallying point of resistance. Although he was unable to regain Borno’s western provinces, he stopped any further inroads into Borno. Al-Kanemi was not a reformer, and he took up arms to preserve the territorial integrity of Borno and also to preserve the Islamic status quo there.

The al-Kanemi dynasty

After al-Kanemi’s death in 1835, his son Omar founded the al-Kanemi dynasty, having displaced the Saifawa dynasty that had ruled for a thousand years. Omar ruled over Borno until 1881. But Borno never regained its former glory. These were years of decline, and the state was beset by internal and external problems. Omar’s incompetence as a
ruler was the cause of much internal unrest, but the main threats came from outside. To the east was the vigorous state of Wadai, which was gaining strength from the Sanusi Order, which brought the Wadai–Benghazi trade route to life. Although the Sanusi were also re-opening the old Borno–Tripoli route, this could not compete with the route to Benghazi, with the result that Borno’s share of the trans-Saharan trade was declining. Although in decline, the once great empire of Borno continued to exist until the last years of the century.

Since the fifteenth century Fulbe herdsmen had been moving steadily into the upper Niger area. The Fulbe in Masina were not happy at the way the Bambara of Segu extended their authority over them in the mid-eighteenth century, ruling through local dynasties who exacted tribute from the Fulbe, raided their herds and also took Fulbe away into slavery. So in 1818 a Fulbe Muslim, Sheikh Ahmadu (sometimes also referred to as Ahmadu Lobbo or Seku Ahmadu), who had been fired with enthusiasm by the message proclaimed by Usman dan Fodio, found that the Fulbe of the region were eager to join in his jihad. This resulted in the establishment of the Fulbe-dominated Islamic state of Masina, which also claimed some authority over Segu, Timbuktu and Kaarta. Masina was governed in accordance with strict Muslim ideals, and it survived until 1862 when, in the course of the jihad of al-Hajj Umar, it was conquered and became part of the Tukolor empire.

Al-Hajj Umar was a Tukolor, born in Futa Toro, south of the lower reaches of the Senegal River, in 1794. Like dan Fodio, he spent some years travelling, visiting large areas of the Sudan and Egypt; he settled for a spell in Bomo and Sokoto before returning to the Futa area in about 1838. The title ‘al-Hajj’, which means ‘the pilgrim’, is an indication that he had made the pilgrimage to Mecca. His message appealed to large numbers of the Fulbe and Tukolor. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Fulbe in Senegambia found the rule of the Torodbe almamis, whom they had earlier helped to put in power, very oppressive. The almamis had also entered into a kind of partnership with the French, allowing them to build fortified posts along the Senegal River valley. The more pious among the Fulbe resented the French military presence and their growing authority. So it is no surprise that the Fulbe of Futa Toro responded with enthusiasm to the appeal of al-Hajj Umar, and throughout the jihad the bulk of the soldiers came from Futa Toro.

In the 1840s al-Hajj Umar set himself up on the borders of Futa Jallon, and with the firearms he imported from the coast he was able to equip his soldiers well. What was different about the jihad of al-Hajj Umar was that whereas the earlier jihads had been more in the nature of spontaneous local uprisings against unpopular pagan rulers, the Tukolor jihad was a consciously planned and executed military operation aimed at creating an Islamic state. Al-Hajj Umar was able to succeed because he had the support of many groups of people. First of all he had the support of Tukolor who emigrated from Futa Toro, his own homeland. The disturbed conditions resulting from the French intrusion also helped him. He also, it would seem, had the support of the slaves.

In 1850 he pushed northwards, and by 1854 the Bambara kingdom of Kaarta was in his hands. He then turned westwards towards the Senegal River, to the south of which his
own homeland of Futa Toro lay. His plans for expanding in this direction were, however, frustrated by the French presence at Medina and between 1857 and 1859 he tried unsuccessfully to dislodge them from their fortified post. He then turned away from the French and directed his attention to Segu to the southeast of Kaarta. By 1861 Segu, which was most sought after because of its position on the upper Niger River, fell to the jihad. Al-Hajj Umar did not stop there, and he then moved against Masina itself, taking it over in 1862; Timbuktu followed in 1863.

Because al-Hajj Umar’s jihad was one of deliberate conquest and forced conversion to Islam, it had the characteristics of a conquest state. His actions had aroused great bitterness in Segu and among the Bambara of the upper Senegal. In 1864 al-Hajj Umar was killed while suppressing Masina resistance to his rule. His son and successor, Ahmadu, inherited an unstable Segu and Masina, which he only partially succeeded in bringing under his control, and it took him the best part of a decade to effectively put his stamp on the area. The Tukolor had hardly established their hold on this area when the French began advancing into the western Sudan. The African and European scrambles came face to face.

As was shown in chapter 7, the French had already started making inroads into the outer reaches of the Tukolor empire before 1889. In 1890 Paris gave permission for an attack on Segu. By 1891 Segu was in French hands and Ahmadu was retreating rapidly as the French moved inexorably towards Timbuktu, which they entered in 1894, having conquered Jenne and Masina on the way. The French drive eastwards continued. In 1895 the Mossi states were taken and in 1899 the French forces were finally at Lake Chad.

The advance on Lake Chad came also from Algeria, Gabon and the French Congo. It was the drive from these last two areas that brought the French face to face with Rabih Zubayr. His kingdom was an offshoot from al-Zubayr Rahma Mansur's secondary empire in the Bahr al-Ghazal. Rabih was one of Zubayr's subordinates, who in 1879 moved west with a well-equipped army into the land south of Wadai. His adventurous career suffered a setback when he was defeated by Wadai in 1887. The arms he depended on to maintain his position came from Benghazi and passed through Wadai on their way to him. With this route now closed to him Rabih moved westwards to Borno, which he conquered in 1894. Rabih may well have established one of the largest states south of the Sahara had it not been for the fact that the French, Germans and British were all converging on Lake Chad. It was the French threat that materialised. He held up French penetration for some seven years but he was finally defeated and killed in 1900, when three French expeditions, from Senegal, Algeria and the French Congo, converged on a point south of Lake Chad to attack him. Both Rabih and Lamy, the French commander, were killed. The area was finally partitioned between the British, French and Germans.

The French advance from Chad in 1902 brought the Sanusi into conflict with Europeans for the first time. They were unable to prevent the French from taking over Kanem, Tibesti and Wadai. There was widespread destruction of Sanusi zawiyas. But the core
of Sanusi strength lay in Cyrenaica and therefore beyond the limits of French expansion. It was the Italian move into Libya in 1911 that affected this core. In their conquest of the Sahara the French met with severe resistance from some of the desert peoples, such as the Moors of the western Sahara, and it was only in 1934 that the French completed the conquest of northern Mauritanina. Not all the desert peoples were enemies and the French obtained the assistance of the Chaamba of the northern Sahara, Bedouin Arabs who earned their livelihood by raiding their neighbours. The French channelled their aggression into another avenue, arming the Chaamba and forming them in a camel corps. The constant internecine fighting between the Moors and the Tuaregs weakened both, making it easier for the French to conquer them. Early in the twentieth century the Tuaregs acknowledged French authority, but they later revolted; the unrest which spread to the central Sahara was not finally put down until 1919. By the end of the partitioning French territories bordered on Libya, Egypt and the Sudan in the east, and on the other side of the Sudan and Ethiopia they had French Somaliland.

The French drive to Lake Chad was only one line of expansion. They also moved in a southerly direction from Bamako on the upper Niger to attack the empire of Samory Touré. Apart from the Sokoto caliphate and the Tukolor empire, there was one other major West African empire created in the African scramble in the interior in the nineteenth century. The Dyula conquest state of Samory Touré (it is also sometimes referred to as the Mandinka state) was to the south of the Tukolor empire. Between Futa Jallon in the west, the Tukolor empire to the northeast and the forests in the south, in an area that is now part of eastern Guinea and southern Mali, there were large numbers of Mande-speaking peoples, who had earlier been part of the powerful Mali kingdom. Both the Mandinka and the Malinke were branches of this Mande-speaking group. The many petty chieftainships did not form a united country prior to the appearance of Samory Touré on the scene. Samory was born in 1830 into a non-Muslim Dyula (Dyula is the collective name for Soninke, Mandinka and Malinke trading groups) trading family to the east of Futa Jallon, in the vicinity of the upper Niger basin. As a trader in his youth Samory gained a valuable insight into the surrounding countryside through which he travelled. He abandoned his trading activities when his mother was taken in a slave raid and carried off into captivity. Samory attached himself to the chief who had bought his mother and prepared to work until he could ransom her. While he was here, he obtained a name for himself as a warrior of some daring and skill and, when his mother had been freed, he turned his attention to building up a following of adventurous young men, and began moving outwards, between 1865 and 1875 conquering numerous states as he carved out a massive new state in the western Sudan – only the Sokoto caliphate and the Tukolor empire were bigger. The unity that he created greatly facilitated trade.

The creation of this state was not the result of a jihad. Samory had converted to Islam during his trading years, but he was not activated by the same reforming zeal as some of his contemporaries. He seems to have regarded Islam primarily as a tool to bring a degree of cultural uniformity into the diverse cultural configuration of peoples he was welding into an empire. So he promoted Islam and encouraged the abandonment of
traditional religious practices, even going so far as to order the destruction of many of
the symbols of the old traditional religion and their replacement with the symbols of
Islam. Muslim education was promoted, mosques were built and Islamic law became
the basis for his rule. Of course his relegation of traditional beliefs and practices to a
secondary position was bitterly resented by the custodians of the old ways.

Islam was a unifying element in his empire. The strength of his army was also crucial.
He succeeded in securing the loyalty of many of his soldiers through his practice of
incorporating male captives into the army rather than selling them as slaves. Modern
breech-loading repeating rifles were imported through Freetown. Samory was a gifted
organiser but he was so busy defending his empire against outside attack that he had
little time to devote to strengthening the internal bonds and administration of his
farflung empire.

Samory was still expanding and forming his empire, when he came up against the
French, who were extending their empire from Senegal to the western Sudan. Here was
a classic case of the African scramble being interrupted by the European scramble. The
Mandinka had their first clash with the French in 1881. When he had begun to carve out
his state, there had been no European threat. The British in Sierra Leone had no plans
to expand inland. But then in 1879 the first signs of future problems were heralded by
the French military advance to the east from Senegal. At the same time Samory was
moving down the Niger valley, and the French and Samory both arrived before Bamako
in 1883. After a few skirmishes, the two agreed to a truce in 1886–1887. This suited the
French who were consolidating their grip on the north. Samory expanded further
eastward into the modern Ivory Coast.

In 1891 the French were free once more to concentrate on Samory and they opened their
attack on him in earnest from Bamako on the upper Niger. Between 1891 and 1894 the
French advanced and Samory withdrew. Samory realised that he would not be able to
hold his own against French artillery fire and would not stand a chance in a pitched
battle. He thus adopted guerrilla tactics and held up the French advance by attacking
their supply lines and ambushing small detachments. He did not need his whole army
for these operations, and some of his trained soldiers who were not involved in fighting
the French were expanding his empire to the east as they conquered other polities.
When the French drove him from the upper Niger, he was able to re-establish his
government in the more recently incorporated parts of his empire. Samory thus con-
quered a second empire, all the time resisting the French drive.

By 1896 Samory’s new empire took in the northern half of the modern Ivory Coast and
extended eastward across a large part of northern Ghana. But this second empire was
different from the first. He was no longer creating a Muslim state; he was conquering
people and exacting tribute from them. Samory did not have the united support of his
empire behind him. He had to pay for the horses and guns to fight the French by selling
slaves, and he raided far and wide in search of slaves to sell. As the French drove him
steadily eastwards, he devastated the country from which he retired so there would be
nothing left in it that the French could use. As the French closed in on him, he became
more ruthless, savagely crushing any signs of opposition to his rule. He razed the town of Kong to the ground after a group of people had worked with the French.

Although the costs were great, the French pursued Samory relentlessly. In 1898 he was captured by a French column and sent to Gabon, where he died in 1900. Samory’s resistance was largely responsible for preventing the French from making further conquests in West Africa at a time when the British were not interested in formal empire. By the time that Samory had eventually been defeated and the French could advance, the British had begun to accept the responsibility for a formal empire. So Samory played a vital role in the final shaping of the partition map of Africa.

Although the disruption to society and loss of life that accompanied the jihads has been stressed, the other side of the coin is that in many cases they brought about political stability, which had a favourable effect on trade and generally stimulated the economy. They brought a new governing class into power. The jihads also established Islam more firmly in West Africa and on a purely cultural level gave a boost to literacy. Usman dan Fodio, Mohammed Bello and al-Hajj Umar had written books setting forth their views on Islam and the way it should be ordered. Large libraries were established in Segu and Sokoto. In the areas affected by the jihads, a feeling of Islamic solidarity emerged that was different from those areas where Islam was weak. This had implications for the later history of West Africa. Although European powers took over this region, the work done by the jihads remained intact. Hiskett writes that ‘One manifestation of this is that in the course of the political prelude to West African independence, the “jihad areas”, especially northern Nigeria, tended to be pan-Islamic in their aspirations, in contrast to the pan-Africanism of non-Islamic areas. Sometimes, too, the heritage of the jihads accustomed Islamic populations to assume superiority over non-Muslims, which made it difficult for them to adjust to a situation in which political power passed, either wholly or partially, to non-Muslims at independence.’

There are other situations too that could be considered to be part of an African partition of Africa. We have talked about the expansion of an existing state in North Africa (Egypt), the formation of a large state in Northeast Africa (Ethiopia), and the establishment of three large empires in the western Sudan of West Africa. The expansion and formation of these states brought about the break-up and incorporation of existing smaller polities and entities. Disintegration is thus also a part of the African scramble for Africa. In the nineteenth century in the region of the Niger delta there were also tremendous upheavals and new alignments resulting from the collapse of the old Oyo empire. The expanding Sokoto caliphate incorporated some of the northern parts of the Oyo empire. A good deal of realignment occurred in areas particularly to the west of the Oyo empire.

Notes

2 Ibid., p. 9.


5 Ibid., p. 168.
International rivalry and the final phase of the partitioning

Major areas of rivalry until 1884

International rivalry played a major role in determining the structure of colonial Africa. Of course such rivalry was not limited to the final phases of the partitioning and it was a driving force of some strength in the events leading up to the Berlin Conference. Until 1884 the rivalry was mostly between Britain and France, and Germany encouraged rather than challenged the pursuit by France of expansion in Africa. Although there was some friction between Britain and Germany, for the most part Britain did not object to Bismarck's colonial ventures. Anglo-French rivalry in the period up to 1884 centred on Egypt and West Africa. The humiliation France suffered in Egypt in 1882 continued to rankle among certain sections of the French civil service and army, and the issue was not finally resolved until 1898. But the desire for revenge was not an all-consuming desire of the French government, although at various times between 1882 and 1898 the government frequently contained ministers who were highly sympathetic to the aim of embarrassing Britain in Northeast Africa. And certainly, no French government before 1898 felt constrained to cooperate with Britain in Egypt and to ease its problems in managing the Egyptian economy.
In West Africa Anglo-French rivalry first made itself manifest in the French Congo in 1882, and it was French interest in the lower Niger and Benue rivers from 1883 that decided Britain to formalise its informal interests in the Niger delta and declare a protectorate. The one area where French influence was being formally, if not officially extended, was in Senegambia and the western Sudan. There was not much Anglo-French competition here, although the French were ultra-sensitive to any movement made by the British in Sierra Leone, expecting an advance into their field of expansion. French army officers on the spot were not averse to blowing the slightest British activity out of proportion and to interpreting this to the government in Paris as a direct challenge to French interests, even though there was no real threat. This heightened sensitivity was due in part to the Anglophobia of sections of the French forces, but it was in part also a calculated ploy, for they knew that there was no more certain manner in which to push a reluctant government into spending money on expansion than to represent this as necessary to prevent Britain from intruding on French interests.

French representatives also eyed the British in Lagos suspiciously. There was some slight basis for this as the British had from time to time over the years thought of joining Lagos and the Gold Coast together, and in the 1870s there had been discussions between the French and British to arrange such a deal. In 1883 fear of British moves in this direction caused the French to renew an old protectorate over Porto Novo. But by 1884 neither Britain nor France had any real plans for extending formal influence into the interior in this direction.

These were the main areas of rivalry by 1884, but Anglo-French rivalry manifested itself in many other ways, for example in the attempts by France at the Berlin Conference to destroy exclusive British control on the lower Niger. And of course Bismarck was keen to fuel the fires of Anglo-French rivalry, although by the end of the Berlin Conference he was beginning to tire of the exercise as Franco-German interests increasingly diverged. As far as Germany is concerned, although it became involved in some minor rivalry with Britain in East Africa, its main role was to attempt to drive a wedge between Britain and France. It has been said that Bismarck's map of Africa lay in Europe, but even after his departure from the scene in 1890, European diplomacy, rather than African interests themselves, played a major role in determining German attitudes towards African issues, although after 1890 the German touch was by no means so sure and subtle as it had been while Bismarck was at the helm.

Up to 1884, and for a number of years after that, the powers remained reluctant to push forward and appropriate the African interior. Only the threat of action from its rival could spur England or France into making a move. In the case of Britain the reluctance of the government to take control saw it engage in attempts to find others who would protect British interests from the French. Thus in the early 1880s British fears that the French would cut off British trade by setting up tariffs at the Congo mouth caused Britain to recognise Portuguese claims to the mouth of the river. In the period between 1885 and 1890, when British interests in West as well as East and Central Africa were threatened and some action seemed desirable, the British resorted to the expedient of granting charters to British companies in order to protect British interests, and thus
relieve the government of the burden of administering new territories. The period between 1886 and 1890 was the era of the chartered companies. In some cases where there were no companies Britain would throw its weight behind one power in order to keep out another potential rival. In 1881 it had encouraged the French to take Tunisia, rather than have Italy dominate both sides of the Mediterranean. Later, in Northeast Africa, Britain encouraged Italian occupation in order to forestall a strengthening of German power.

After the Berlin Conference, France was the first of the European powers to resume a policy of active colonial expansion. From about 1889 the pace of the partitioning gathered momentum. Partly as a result of the increasing importance of the Colonial Department – which in March 1889 was transferred from the Ministry of Marine and Colonies to the Ministry of Commerce, where interest and control over it were not as strong as they had been previously – expansionist initiatives from official quarters in France gathered strength. The enthusiastic imperialist Eugène Etienne was under-colonial secretary from 1887 to 1888, and after a short break, from 1889 to 1892, and was able to throw his weight behind the expansion of France’s African empire. ‘The temper of French colonial policy was about to change,’ Hargreaves writes. ‘Indeed, Britain was fortunate to have concluded this agreement [the convention of 1889] before Etienne became fully entrenched in his new appointment.’

For Britain the change came much later. Joseph Chamberlain, who came to office in 1895 as colonial secretary, gave expression to the aggressive nationalism that infused the scramble for Africa with a new spirit. So France was vigorously expanding in West Africa for a number of years before the British did so officially.

As the partitioning progressed, it underwent a transformation. This was partly because of the nature of the partitioning process itself, and partly because of the situation in Europe. Conflict increased in Africa as the interior came more under European control: conflict with African polities, and conflict between the interests of European powers. And both types of conflicts were given impetus by the nationalistic climate of intense rivalry and competition that existed in Europe. In the early part of the partition the elites in the government dominated the process, and they were very conscious of not spending taxpayers’ money on African adventures. Action was therefore restricted and so were the number of Europeans present in Africa. But this all changed. By the later 1890s there was an aggressive spirit of imperialism abroad. Whereas earlier partition had been confined to parts of North Africa and to West Africa, within a few years of the Berlin Conference it was extended to the rest of Africa, thus immeasurably complicating issues. Nationalism was the reason that international rivalry and competition became the preserves of the masses, instead of being confined to the elites in the rarified atmosphere of the corridors of government power. Towards the end of the scramble this rivalry resulted in a change in perceptions of colonial issues that was at great variance with the early moves in the process. This change was reflected in incidents such as the Fashoda crisis, where for some time Britain and France faced each other over a narrow abyss of war, while the British taxpayer happily acquiesced in the expenditure of vast
sums of money for British troops to conquer the Sudan and build a railway line which no exports could possibly hope to pay for.

**ANGLO-FRENCH RIVALRY IN WEST AFRICA**

French expansion in the western and central Sudan was opposed by indigenous states, and there was no serious rivalry with other European nations. But elsewhere in West Africa a degree of Anglo-French rivalry was present in virtually every area. At the time of the Anglo-French convention of 1889 Britain seemed unconcerned about the hinterlands of Gambia and Sierra Leone. This soon changed. According to W. G. Hynes, at the end of 1891 metropolitan business circles were horrified when they suddenly realised that the government had forever circumscribed the limits of Sierra Leone by agreeing to the 1889 convention. In truth the damage had been done earlier when Britain had not objected to the establishment of a French protectorate over Futa Jallon; in addition, the British had also recognised the validity of the French protectorate over Samory in 1887. Although they could not remedy the situation, in the 1890s the British pushed inland as far they could, making their authority effective in that area that had hitherto been outside their control. This was not accomplished without some fierce resistance.

Hynes believes that the anger of business interests at the end of 1891 when they realised how the government had allowed Sierra Leone to be cut off from the interior, ‘marked a significant turning point in the partition of West Africa. Coinciding as it did with the beginnings of another slump in British exports and news of the Méline tariff in France, it produced a sharp outcry in commercial circles. If there was nothing to be done to recover what had been “lost” in the area of Sierra Leone, the principal chambers of commerce were determined that the Sierra Leone experience would not be repeated elsewhere in West Africa. A commercial campaign to extend British influence into the West African interior developed at the beginning of 1892.'

This new situation coincided with another slump in the British economy from 1890 to 1894, and by now businessmen were no longer so confident that they would be able to open up new markets themselves without government intervention. In the new mood of aggressive nationalism and international rivalry in Europe, the government was beginning to realise that the nation’s interests would have to be defended everywhere in the world and not only in Europe, and so they were more inclined to heed the pleas of mercantile pressure groups. This was true also of France and it was when European politics and rivalry became caught up with expansion in Africa that colonialism became a major popular force in France.

It is uncertain whether commercial groups in England had anything to do with his decision but in March 1892 Lord Salisbury seemed to realise that the Anglo-French convention of 1889 was not a sufficient safeguard for British interests on the Gold Coast. He gave instructions for treaties to be concluded with the chiefs to the north of the Asante, in which they agreed not to accept any other power’s protection without first consulting the British and obtaining their consent. Even this very limited step was taken reluctantly and only because of the threat from France. Business pressure groups were
Samory buys time for the British

British reluctance in the early 1890s to take decisive steps in the Gold Coast interior would have had serious consequences for British interests had it not been for the stubborn resistance of Samory to the French. This was true also of Nigeria. Professor Fage has pointed out that Samory delayed the French ‘and helped produce a different balance in the partition between France and Britain east of Timbuctu. French forces were not established in Borgu (which they approached from the south, not from the west) until 1894, or in Mossi territory until 1896. There was thus time for British commercial interests to persuade the Colonial Office to enter into treaty relations with the African rulers in the hinterland of the Gold Coast and Ashanti, and for these interests themselves, in the form of Goldie’s agents, to secure treaties in what was to become the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria and even to begin to try and occupy this sizeable territory.3

Asante protectorate

In the end it was the combination of the French threat and the appointment in 1895 of Joseph Chamberlain as colonial secretary that marked a change in British attitudes. In September 1895 Chamberlain made the decision that the Asante asantehene should be compelled to accept a British resident at his court as outwardly visible proof of British protection. At long last Asante was invaded and declared a British protectorate in 1896.

France threatens Lagos interior

It was in the region of Dahomey and Nigeria that Anglo-French rivalry in West Africa reached its height in the 1890s. In 1892 France invaded Dahomey, and then started expanding northwards in order to occupy the navigable part of the Niger River below the Bussa rapids. This plan threatened the Niger Company’s monopoly. In terms of the 1889 convention the French agreed not to interfere south of a line drawn between Say on the Niger and Lake Chad. But the convention did not determine the western borders of the British sphere of influence from Say to the coast, and France moved into this area, threatening the Lagos hinterland.

French threat repelled

For years merchant bodies had unsuccessfully been applying pressure on the British government to act against the Ijebu who had closed the trade route from the coast to the interior. The French threat finally moved the British government, and in May 1892 the Ijebu were attacked and defeated. The signing of more treaties in Yorubaland led to the whole of this region coming under British influence in 1896 and the threat from the French being warded off. Hallett writes that: ‘In few parts of Africa was the coming of alien rule so cordially welcomed, for the Yoruba were exhausted by their internal dissensions and many communities had suffered gravely from the closing of trade routes and from the banditry and slave-raiding or kidnapping that flourished during the country’s endemic state of insecurity.’4

Royal Niger Co.

The new situation also affected Goldie’s Royal Niger Company. The company had been given a charter so that it could look after British interests without involving the government in any direct financial or military commitment, but as it became clear that
INTERNATIONAL RIVALRY; FINAL PHASE OF PARTITIONING

it could no longer do so, its usefulness drew to an end. On 1 January 1891 the Oil Rivers Protectorate was reorganised as the Niger Coast Protectorate, after it became clear that the British merchants in the area were not prepared for Goldie's charter to be extended there. They were afraid that he would try to monopolise trade here in the way that he had done further upstream. By the mid-1890s metropolitan business interests were vociferous critics of Goldie's exclusive trading practices. Chamberlain had little time for company rule. He believed that the state should take the lead and, instead of the purely negative aim of excluding rivals, a new, positive attempt should be made to open new areas and markets. The company's main sin was that it was unable to effectively occupy the country to which it had obtained 'rights'.

In 1894 and 1895 relations between Lagos, and Nupe and Ilorin, the two most southernmost emirates of the Sokoto caliphate, north of the Ijebu, became increasingly strained. The British government demanded that the company make its authority effective there, but despite a successful attack on Ilorin in February 1897, the company lacked the resources to impose an effective administration on Nupe and Ilorin and was forced to withdraw without doing so.

But more serious than this failure was the inability of the company to prevent the French from expanding from northern Dahomey to Borgu. If the French obtained territory to the south of the Bussa rapids, which was the last obstacle to navigation on the Niger, this would have serious consequences for the company's monopoly. The 1889 convention that defined the boundary between Lagos and Dahomey did not do so for much more than 150 km inland. Between the limits agreed upon in 1889 and 1890 — in which the French recognised as a British sphere the area south of a line drawn from Say on the upper Niger to Barruwa on Lake Chad — there was a large area not covered by these agreements. This was Borgu. There was nothing to stop the French from approaching from the west. Although the French had recognised Goldie's 1885 treaty with the sultan of Sokoto, they maintained that the sultan did not have rights over Borgu, that the real sovereign of Borgu was the king of Nikki. In 1894 a French expedition raced to Nikki to sign a treaty, but they were beaten by a few days by Frederick Lugard, who led a Royal Niger Company expedition to the area. The French contested the legality of Lugard's treaty with the king of Nikki, as well as other treaties he signed, and continued to press ahead.

Salisbury would have liked to avoid the tensions building up here, but early in 1897 Chamberlain began placing increasing pressure on the prime minister. Because he wanted to keep Chamberlain in his cabinet, Salisbury was forced to compromise, despite the fact that he and many of his cabinet ministers were not at all happy with the initiatives of 'Pushful Joe'. By conciliating France rather than running the risk of alienating it, he could also indirectly conciliate Russia and so diminish pressure on the Mediterranean, India and China.

In the middle of 1897 Chamberlain obtained a fairly free hand to oppose the French in the Niger bend. In February 1898 the West African Frontier Force, paid for by the British government and led by Lugard, went into the Lagos hinterland to occupy as much
Africa at the end of partitioning, 1913
territory as it possibly could without actually provoking a war with France. Chamberlain was prepared to meet force with force and in Lugard he had a military commander who had a great belief in the efficacy of military conquest.

In May and June 1898 the West African Frontier Force and the French army in Borgu stood face to face. War was a distinct possibility, but the matter was settled at the conference table in the Niger Convention of 14 June 1898. Bargaining on the fact that the French would not be prepared to go to war and that Lugard had a strong force in the area, Chamberlain put pressure on the French. Borgu was divided between Britain and France; the French retained Nikki but were excluded from the navigable part of the Niger below Bussa.

Chamberlain had for some time decided to dispense with the company's services, but he could not do this straight away as it was necessary to keep in force the various treaties that the company had made with local chiefs in order to bolster the British government's position at the talks with the French. After the 1898 agreement these treaties were no longer important and the company disappeared in December 1899. On 1 January 1900 the British government assumed direct responsibility for the protectorate of Northern Nigeria.

Parts of this vast area had not been subjected to European control and between 1900 and 1903 Lugard broke the power of the Sokoto caliphate. In the northeastern parts, where Rabih had held sway after his conquest of Borno, his defeat by the French in 1900 left a power vacuum, and British authority was established without a recourse to arms. In the more remote areas in difficult terrain, the emirs were persuaded, partly by arguments and partly by threats, to accept British authority.

**ANGLO-PORTUGUESE FRiction AND THE ENTRY OF CECIL RHODES**

North of the Zambezi River British interests were represented mainly by missionaries, who made repeated appeals for help against the growing power of Mlozi in the Nyasa area. Salisbury, however, was not overly concerned with what was happening in the Nyasa region. He was far more interested in Mashonaland and Matabeleland to the south of the Zambezi, as he wanted to reserve these areas for future Cape expansion, which would help strengthen British influence in southern Africa and tilt the balance of power within South Africa in favour of the Cape and against the Transvaal. He did not want to establish protectorates there - all he wanted to do was to keep others out. This policy was, however, being threatened by the unexpected vigour being shown by the Portuguese.

The Portuguese had had colonies in Africa for a long time, but had done very little to develop them. The colonies had relied heavily on the slave trade and when this came to an end they were in dire straits. The government in Portugal could do little to assist them. In Angola a number of attempts were made to raise money locally by extending the boundaries of the colony and taxing the newly incorporated peoples. However, the cost of keeping garrisoned forts in the conquered territories exceeded by far the income
from this source, and by 1870 the only part of Angola that was firmly in Portuguese hands was the immediate hinterland of Luanda and Benguela.

In Mozambique, Portuguese authority was confined to a few ports and trading posts up the Zambezi. Under these unpromising circumstances it made no economic sense at all to maintain the colonies, but, to the Portuguese, expansion in Africa was very much a matter of prestige. In 1875 the Geographical Society of Lisbon was formed, and its African committee did much to publicise Portugal's historical role in Africa and restore pride in Portuguese exploration. The society organised numerous expeditions, and between 1877 and 1885 Portuguese travellers, among whom was Serpa Pinto, journeyed over much of Central Africa.

Portugal had dreams of creating an empire right across Africa, of linking up Angola and Mozambique. It seemed a feasible idea. After all, Portuguese traders operated throughout Central Africa; there had been trans-continental trade for some time. The British government did not want to assume responsibility in Central Africa, and in 1881 Whitehall was not overly concerned at the thought of Portugal occupying Blantyre, so long as guarantees could be obtained that British subjects and property would be safe. Government officials concentrated not on preventing Portuguese penetration, but on obtaining freedom for commerce in the interior. Although the Portuguese had done very little to develop either Angola or Mozambique, they nevertheless regarded the Lake Nyasa area as coming within their sphere of influence. By 1883 British governing circles were less sanguine about Portuguese expansion than they had been two years earlier, and in that year the British consul at Mozambique explored the country around Lake Shirwa and found that Portuguese half-castes were extending Portuguese influence as far inland as the lakes. They were attracting a great deal of trade as they were prepared to supply guns and powder in return for slaves, which the British at Blantyre would not do.

The British government may not have been very concerned about Portuguese activity, but by the early 1880s there were over 100 European missionaries, most of them Protestants, and they were very worried about the possibility of Portugal extending her authority in the region between Angola and Mozambique. By the second half of the 1880s the Portuguese were sending out numerous expeditions - many of them, ironically enough, financed by British businessmen - to sign treaties with chiefs in the interior. Although this activity worried the Protestant missionaries in the area south of Lake Nyasa, who feared exclusion if the area came under Portuguese control, Salisbury began to think in terms of making an arrangement with the Portuguese, although he knew that if he did not act here and allowed the Scottish mission field to come under the auspices of the Portuguese Catholics, he would lose the support of the Presbyterian vote in Scotland. Portuguese claims north of the Zambezi would be admitted if the Portuguese would recognise the area south of the river as a British sphere of influence. This would of course mean abandoning the British missionaries around Lake Nyasa, but Salisbury in any case had no intention of assuming control of the Lake Nyasa region to please the missionaries. His main objective was to secure Mashonaland and Matabeleland as a British sphere, and to accomplish this he was prepared to allow the
Salisbury and Rhodes: mutual interests

Rhodes had had his eye on the country north of the Limpopo River for some time and, armed with a concession to the mineral rights of the country acquired by his agents from Lobengula, he went to England to obtain a charter for a company to occupy, develop and administer the interior. He would do this at no cost at all to the British government. Not only would Rhodes occupy the area south of the Zambezi, but he had plans for the region north of the Zambezi as well. All of this dovetailed very nicely with Salisbury's own plans for interfering with the balance of power between the republican north and the colonial south and with the policy of hemming in and isolating the Transvaal. Salisbury would after all not have to negotiate with the Portuguese. He would not have to abandon the Nyasa missions to Portugal. Salisbury knew that Rhodes's plans were part of a Cape-to-Cairo ideal that Rhodes shared with Harry Johnston, one of Britain's more imperially minded consuls. Salisbury himself was not a great supporter of the Cape-to-Cairo ideal. Lord Rosebery was, and so were the Foreign Office experts. Salisbury's attitude was that if he could do something to satisfy those to whom this ideal meant so much then he would do so, provided that it did not conflict with any really important British interests as he saw them.

Although Rhodes had hoped that the charter he had asked for would include Bechuanaland and the Nyasa region, in deference to the missionaries and philanthropists the British government excluded these two regions from the charter. Rhodes would, however, pay for the policing and administration of the Nyasa region. The charter, which was issued on 29 October 1889, gave the British South Africa Company wide financial and administrative powers over a huge and vaguely defined area north of Bechuanaland, north and west of the Transvaal and west of the Portuguese dominions. No limits were laid down in the north and west.

Rhodes discovered that Harry Johnston, who was about to set off for the Nyasa region to take up the post of British consul, shared his ideal of extending the British empire northwards and he gave Johnston £2,000 so that he could take a wider view of his task than the small allowance provided by the British government would permit. Johnston was responsible for the whole of the British sphere north of the Zambezi (the modern states of Malawi and Zambia). It was an enormous task, complicated by the fact that he was serving two masters.

The situation in the vicinity of Lake Nyasa was very unstable. Mlozi was still wreaking havoc around Lake Nyasa when Johnston arrived. In the second half of 1889 Johnston made treaties with the chiefs west of Lake Nyasa and succeeded in bringing the war with Mlozi to an end. Considering the small means at his disposal, Johnson's achievement was remarkable. Although he had only 70 Sikhs and 80 Zanzibaris with whom to bring a vast area under control, within the space of five years he laid the basis for the administration of the protectorate and broke the power of the slave raiders. Mlozi was finally defeated at the end of 1895. This was not Johnston's only military operation and
in the 1890s he had military engagements with the Yao, Swahili-Arabs, Chewa and Ngoni.

But he could not use military means to persuade a determined Serpa Pinto and his Portuguese expedition to cease their activities south of Lake Nyasa. The Portuguese withdrew only after the British government sent Lisbon an ultimatum in January 1890, and the Nyasa region was proclaimed as the British Central African Protectorate (later renamed Nyasaland) in 1889. This decision, by a British government normally highly reluctant to undertake any new formal responsibilities, was made easier by the fact that Rhodes would pay for the administration of the protectorate. The British government did little more than meet the salary of Johnston, who was appointed commissioner and consul-general in the British sphere north of the Zambezi. The company stopped subsidising the protectorate only in 1895.

In their attempts to enlarge their colonial boundaries, the Portuguese were further frustrated by the Anglo-Portuguese agreement of June 1891. It was because of the friendly relations between England and Germany at that stage that Britain was able to impose on the isolated Portugal a settlement she bitterly resented.5

While all of this was taking place north of the Zambezi, the main thrust of company activity was being directed to the territory south of the Zambezi. Lobengula understood his agreement with Rhodes’s agents to mean that a few prospectors would enter his land and dig some holes. He had not been led to expect a Pioneer Column of 180 settlers and some 500 members of the British South Africa Police who in September 1890 raised the British flag at Fort Salisbury in Mashonaland. Lobengula was incensed when he discovered that he had been tricked and that the whites intended to settle permanently in the Matabele’s traditional raiding grounds. It was not long before tension between the Matabele and the settlers reached breaking point. This bothered Rhodes, who feared its effects on the company’s shares in London. Besides this, many people believed that rich deposits of gold, far more than had thus far been found in Mashonaland, were waiting to be uncovered in Matabeleland. Lobengula’s hostile attitude prevented prospecting. So Rhodes did nothing to stop the drift to war.

Hostilities broke out in 1893. Within a few short weeks the power of the Matabele was shattered and their capital was in company hands. In January 1894 Lobengula died away from home, a hunted fugitive. This was not the end of the reckoning with the Matabele. In March 1896 a revolt broke out and within a few months it spread to Mashonaland. By this time the Shona had a number of grievances against their new rulers, including the confiscation of cattle and land and the introduction of harsh taxes. The Shona continued the struggle after the Matabele had acknowledged defeat, but in 1897 they too bowed to the inevitable, and the rebellion was brought to an end.

EGYPT AND THE WATERS OF THE NILE

For a number of years after 1882 Britain regarded her presence in Egypt as temporary. It intended withdrawing as soon as it could establish an acceptable government and put Egyptian finances in order, so that its investments would be safe. But this proved
very difficult to achieve. Although Britain’s oft-expressed intentions to withdraw were no doubt genuine, as Hopkins states, ‘Britain had important interests to defend in Egypt and she was prepared to withdraw only if conditions guaranteeing the security of those interests were met – and they never were.’ The Liberal government stayed there ‘because those members of the government who had pushed Gladstone into Egypt were not going to let him out until their aims had been achieved’. They were helped in this by Baring, who became consul-general in Egypt in 1883. ‘Baring’s programme of administrative and financial reforms was very similar to that proposed by the nationalists. But Baring delivered what the nationalists could not: confidence and reliability. Britain’s formal presence in Egypt provided a guarantee which attracted investment and opened opportunities to foreign enterprise ... Staying on suited all those in the metropole who had pressed for occupation. The causes of entry ensured that there would be no quick exit.’

Various formulas for withdrawal were devised, but none of them satisfied the French. Although they wanted Britain to withdraw as the British presence in Egypt was a constant reminder of their humiliation, they would not agree to any arrangement that left a loophole for Britain to re-occupy the country if it became necessary in the future, or which envisaged the return of Egypt to the Ottoman Turks. France felt that this would set a bad precedent for the French colonies of Algeria and Tunisia, which had also formerly been Turkish possessions. There were also limits to the pressure that could be applied, for French investments were being well looked after in Egypt, while French cultural influence, which was very strong there, continued to expand. With the stability provided by the British occupation, French investors wanted to put their money into Egypt rather than take it out.

Around 1887–1888 Salisbury began to think that Britain should after all not be in such a hurry to leave Egypt. There were signs of a growing alliance between Russia and France, and British influence in Constantinople had clearly declined. Salisbury still hoped to prevent Turkey from being partitioned, but he saw that this might not be possible, in which case he would have to fall back on Cairo for the defence of the Levant. And if Britain was faced with serious French hostility there would be no hope of containing Russia at the Straits. By 1889 Salisbury had come to a firm decision that for the foreseeable future Britain would have to remain in Egypt.

This meant that the Nile would have to be protected, for without its life-giving water the Fertile Crescent would be a desert. In order to secure this water supply and ensure that it was not interfered with by rivals, British interest in the areas through which the Nile ran increased. Thus the Sudan was seen in a new light, as were the sources of the Nile in the Ethiopian highlands (Blue Nile) and Lake Victoria (White Nile). Despite the lack of stone or other building material anywhere along the course of the Nile, groups in France had spoken about the possibility of damming up the Nile and so starving Egypt, without spelling out how exactly it could be done. Today we know that no European power at the time possessed the sort of technical expertise that would have been required to do this, but the threat nevertheless appeared real to the late Victorians.
This new attitude towards Egypt changed the picture with regard to Northeast and East Africa, particularly with regard to the Sudan and to Uganda. But as in the case of Egypt and the British occupation of it in 1882, historians today approach the question of the Nile strategy with caution. How important was this Nile strategy? In 1894 Lord Rosebery failed to obtain French and German assent to a British plan for the lease from Leopold of a corridor between lakes Edward and Tanganyika which would have been an important link in the attempt to realise the Cape-to-Cairo dream. He then made an unsuccessful attempt to persuade the French to recognise the upper Nile as a British sphere. But what the French were prepared to do was to give an undertaking that they would not enter the upper Nile region if Britain agreed to do the same. The price of agreeing to this would be some territorial concessions in West Africa. If Britain had been thinking purely in terms of strategy this would have solved the problem, which was its fear of a French challenge in this area. But Rosebery was not prepared to make territorial sacrifices in West Africa or to contemplate the territorial concessions that would be required on the upper Nile if he agreed with this proposal. In other words, the strategic significance of the upper Nile region, although important, was not so great that it could override all other considerations.

In 1986 Hopkins also downplayed the significance of the Nile strategy. Robinson and Gallagher believed that strategic factors played a vital role in the partition and that the key to the British presence in large parts of Africa was Egypt with its position on the route to India and its suitability as a base for the defence of British Mediterranean interests. According to them the strategic importance of Egypt and the eastern part of Africa (for the defence of Egypt eventually involved Britain in the defence of the sources of the Nile in the Sudan and Uganda) far outweighed the more promising commercial prospects in West Africa. ‘Nothing is more striking,’ they write, ‘about the selection of British claims in tropical Africa between 1882 and 1895 than the emphasis on the east and the comparative indifference to the west. The British chose to concentrate on the Nile and its approaches. Their over-riding concern was not with tropical Africa as such but with security in the Mediterranean and the Orient ... The neglect of West African claims on the other hand, shows a relative indifference to tropical African commercial gains. Trade prospects had always seemed better in western than in the eastern regions ... Yet it was not these commercial options that the late-Victorians were most anxious to claim. They preferred to make the empire safer in poorer east Africa than to make it wealthier in the richer west.’

Hopkins has queried the above conclusion. He believes that ‘A reassessment of the Foreign Office memoranda on which Robinson and Gallagher rest so much of this part of their case shows that East Africa's strategic importance was considered not in relation to the Canal but in relation to the Cape ... Furthermore, the Foreign Office and sundry business interests regarded East Africa primarily as a land of economic opportunity; hence their emphasis on the interior, and not merely on the coast, on the potential for white settlement, and on the wealth which might be generated more readily there than West Africa, where disappointments were more familiar. Egypt played little part in these calculations.’ In other words, although Northeast and East Africa were important, it was not only because of the strategic value of the upper Nile, but also because of
the hope of economic rewards in East Africa and the desire to keep the region available for expansion from the Cape.

To the south of Egypt lay the Sudan. It was nominally under the control of Egypt, but opposition to this in the Sudan itself was very strong. Religious idealists were upset when the Turko-Egyptian government brought in non-Sudanese teachers, ignoring the Sudanese teachers; they did not like the way that Christians such as Baker and Gordon were given authority. The livelihood of many Sudanese came from the slave trade and they were bitterly opposed to the vigorous campaign against that trade conducted by Baker and Gordon. Mohammed Ahmad, the son of a Dongola boatbuilder, succeeded in uniting this opposition to Egyptian rule, and in 1881 he let it be known that he was the Mahdi of the Muslim prophesies, the one whom God had sent to bring justice to the world and overthrow foreign oppressors.

The Mahdist revolution

The Mahdist went onto the offensive and late in 1883, after they had annihilated a hastily recruited Egyptian army sent against them, what had hitherto been a localised revolt became a nationwide revolution. Virtually the whole of the Sudan came under the Mahdi's control. Britain, at this stage, still regarded its presence in Egypt as temporary and had no desire to become too deeply embroiled in the affairs of the Sudan. The reconquest of the Sudan could wait until Egypt was once again in control of its own destiny. The British government therefore resolved to evacuate all Egyptian troops and officials from the Sudan. Gordon was sent to Khartoum to accomplish this, but he was besieged in Khartoum and while the British dallied about sending reinforcements to help him, the situation deteriorated. On 26 January 1885 the Mahdi captured Khartoum and Gordon was killed. The British left the Sudan to the Mahdists, who established their capital at Omdurman on the west bank of the Nile, opposite Khartoum. Gordon's defence of Khartoum made him a hero in the eyes of the British public, who henceforth had an emotional stake in the Sudan.

Five months after the death of Gordon the Mahdi himself died and Abdallahi, one of three men to whom the Mahdi had given the title khalifa (successor), emerged as the man in control and began making war on all sides. By the late 1880s the British had decided that their stay in Egypt would continue for some time, and it seemed likely that they would eventually have to reconquer the Sudan. But they were in no hurry to do so. Britain in the later 1880s did not assume colonial responsibilities unless it was forced to do so. Under Abdallahi there was growing friction in the state, and Salisbury began to hope that the state would disintegrate of its own accord and that it would more or less fall into British hands. It seemed a good idea to wait and see what happened. In addition, a large-scale invasion would cost money. Certainly the British parliament would not be keen to pay the costs, and Germany would oppose the necessary funds being drawn from Egyptian finances.

In 1889–1891 the British were more concerned about the Italian advance towards the Nile, and in the Anglo-Italian treaty of March 1891 the Italians agreed to stay away from the Nile valley in return for British recognition of an Italian sphere of influence in the
Ethiopian highlands. Thus the Nile was sealed off in this direction. The securing of the waters of the Nile where they flowed into Lake Victoria was not quite so simple.

**Kenya and Uganda**

The Anglo-French rivalry that was so strong in West Africa was carried over to East Africa but on a much smaller scale because French possessions here were limited to the Comoro Islands, Nossi Bé, Réunion and Madagascar. The hopes of the Merina of Madagascar that Britain would save them from their increasing subjection to the French were ended by the Anglo-French agreement of 1890 when Britain recognised the French protectorate over Madagascar and the French accepted British claims to Zanzibar. But British influence on the island remained strong, and for many years French control was only partial.

Anglo-German rivalry came to the fore in East Africa but it never assumed serious proportions. With British support (part of the price it was paying for German backing on the caisse de la dette publique) Germany was able to brush aside the sultan’s objections to its East African claims. The Anglo-German agreement of 1886 restricted the sultan’s mainland possessions to a 16-km-wide coastal strip. The hinterland was divided into British and German spheres. The agreement left most of what is now Kenya within the British sphere of influence, but the British government did not wish to become formally involved in the area.

However, in 1888 they granted a charter to William Mackinnon, founder of the British India Steam Navigation Company, who had formed the British East African Association together with some former consular officials and philanthropists, and obtained from the sultan of Zanzibar full political, financial and judicial control of a stretch of coast north and south of Mombasa in return for a sum equivalent to what he normally obtained from the region in customs dues.

The British government hoped that Mackinnon would assert British influence in the area that was later to become Uganda, so that the whole of the northern part of Lake Victoria would come into the British sphere. Mackinnon had great plans for linking his field of operations with those of Rhodes and he rather liked the sound of a continuous band of British territory from the Cape to Cairo. But the Imperial British East Africa Company was not so vigorous as either Goldie’s or Rhodes’s companies. It did not have the financial resources of either. Mackinnon was not of the same calibre as either of the two other men. There was no ready-made product from which a profit could be made as in the case of the palm oil of West Africa. For many years East Africa had suffered from underdevelopment because all activities were geared to the slave and ivory trade.

The German East Africa Company was afraid that the Imperial British East Africa Company would encircle German East Africa, and there was much suspicion and rivalry between the two companies. This rivalry reached a climax when expeditions were sent to rescue Emin Pasha, an eccentric German officer, Dr Edouard Schnitzer, who had become a Muslim and adopted the name Emin Pasha. Since 1877 he had been the Egyptian governor of the Equatoria province in the south of the Sudan, which had
not fallen to the Mahdists. But the predominance of the Mahdists in the rest of the Sudan had cut him off from Egypt, and Britain was concerned about his fate. Stanley was asked to help to rescue him. Approaching from the Congo, Stanley established contact with Emin in April 1888, but the German did not feel that he needed rescuing and it was only a year later that he agreed to accompany Stanley to the east coast, where they arrived with a large following of some 1,500 people in December 1889. On the journey Stanley signed treaties with chiefs on behalf of the Imperial British East Africa Company.

Stanley’s expedition was not the only one sent out, and in July 1889 Carl Peters had set out from the neighbourhood of Witu to find his countryman. When he heard that Stanley had already rescued Emin Pasha, instead of returning, Peters continued his march towards Lake Victoria in an attempt to win the area for Germany. On 3 March 1890 he concluded a treaty of friendship with the Bugandan leader, the kabaka Mwanga. It looked as if Buganda would come into the hands of Germany, but Salisbury did not believe that Bismarck, knowing how important the British considered Uganda and having no particular German interests there, would antagonise Britain by assuming control. Bismarck indeed was not inclined to support Peters. He was still putting down the revolt in the German sphere and was not keen to go into another, even more unsettled area. But at the end of March 1890 Bismarck was suddenly dismissed from office, and with Emperor Wilhelm II likely to step in at any moment and give his own peculiar direction to affairs, Salisbury judged it prudent to come to an agreement with Germany. Leopold was also seeking to extend his borders, and in the period 1886–1887 he was trying to include Uganda and the upper Nile in his new state, ready to persuade Emin Pasha to serve him rather than Egypt and to bring his Equatoria into the Congo Free State.

The Anglo-German agreement of 1 July 1890 fixed the boundaries between the German and British spheres of interest in West as well as East Africa. In West Africa the boundary between British Niger interests and Kamerun was adjusted so that Kamerun could extend to Lake Chad – the British were happy to do this to block off French movement eastwards.

In October 1889 Bismarck made a claim to the Somali coast from Witu northwards to Kismayu. Although the territory itself had no value, Britain had been opposed to the claim because its hinterland could be extended to the upper Nile – Kenya and Uganda could not be secure while this was in German hands. After Bismarck’s fall in March 1890 his successors wanted closer cooperation with Britain in Europe and Britain hoped to exclude the Germans from the Somali coast. But the colonialists had the support of Kaiser Wilhelm II and wanted more African territory. By 1890, however, British opinion was turning in favour of extending British possessions in Africa and was not keen to make concessions to the Germans. But Salisbury was able to give the Germans something they did want. Germany received the North Sea island of Heligoland, which appealed particularly to the Kaiser. He had just become admiral of the fleet and saw great advantages in having the island as a naval base to protect Hamburg and Bremen. In return the Germans accepted the British position in Zanzibar and the Nyasa hinter-
land, gave up Bismarck's protectorate on the Somali coast and recognised a 'British sphere' on the upper Nile.

**Cape-to-Cairo**

In the 1890 agreement Salisbury attempted to keep the Cape-to-Cairo road open and made a bid to secure, as a British sphere of influence, the gap between Lake Tanganyika and Lake Victoria and also the gap between Lake Nyasa and Lake Tanganyika. But the Germans were not prepared to concede this. It seemed as if the British were trying to encircle them. Faced with a choice between getting the Germans out of the Somali coast and insisting on keeping the Cape-to-Cairo road open, Salisbury did not hesitate. Cape-to-Cairo could be relinquished. Only the gap between the north end of Lake Nyasa and the southern end of Lake Tanganyika was excluded from the German sphere of influence, and the northern gap came into German hands.

**Negotiations on a corridor**

R. O. Collins suggests that in 1890 Salisbury was not meekly giving up the Cape-to-Cairo idea, but that he gave in so easily to Germany because he had seen another way of securing this ideal. Salisbury told Mackinnon that he would have no objection to him reaching some agreement with Leopold to obtain a corridor, and in 1892 Leopold and the company did reach agreement on the hire of a 25-km-wide corridor connecting Lake Edward and Lake Tanganyika behind German territory. But Leopold's price for this was access to the Nile, which the British government was not prepared to pay, and so the agreement fell through. But two years later the British government itself revived the corridor idea and a treaty was concluded with Leopold in May 1894 which gave them a corridor in return for the permanent lease of the Bahr al-Ghazal province of the Sudan. This included access to the upper Nile. The reason for this change was that the French were casting more glances towards the Nile River in the Sudan, and in this way the British hoped to seal the Nile off from France with their own corridor and Leopold's possession of the Bahr al-Ghazal. But the French immediately objected to Leopold taking over this region, and Germany added its protests since it was not happy with the British corridor which would cut off its access to the trade of the Congo. Leopold withdrew his offer of a corridor under pressure.

**British attitude**

Although in the 1890 convention with Germany Salisbury had reserved for Britain what was later to become Uganda and Kenya, he had no intention of taking vigorous steps in the area. He merely did not want Germany to have it. He had hoped that Mackinnon would have been able to secure Uganda for Britain, but so far he had not done so.

**Disorder in Uganda**

In 1890 Frederick Lugard went to Uganda on the company's behalf to try to bring the region under control. He inevitably became involved in the complicated and confused religious-political struggle that was taking place. The missionaries and their converts were divided into a number of camps, the so-called Inglisa party of Protestants, the Fransa party of Catholics, and the Muslim party. With the meagre resources at his disposal he could not bring order to the country.

**Withdrawal**

In July 1891 the company, which was in dire financial straits, decided to withdraw from Uganda, much to the horror of the missionaries. Between money raised by the missions and funds provided by the cabinet under pressure of its new Colonial Office head, Lord Rosebery, the company was able to continue its operations temporarily. Rosebery, who
was very much in favour of keeping Uganda, used this breathing space to organise a public campaign through the press in favour of retaining Uganda. Sir Gerald Porter was sent there in March 1893 and he advised that, since Uganda was the key to the Nile, it should not be allowed to fall into foreign hands.

By this time people were becoming more aware of the developing French threat to the upper Nile, and this greatly strengthened the movement in favour of retaining Uganda. Rosebery’s hand was also strengthened because he was now prime minister. He had the wholehearted support of the British missionary movement which, in its representations to the public, portrayed the issue in simple terms: annexation or a withdrawal that would very likely result in the death of hundreds of African converts, not to mention European clergy. In April 1894 he declared Uganda a protectorate.

Much of the western part of Kenya was included in the Uganda protectorate in 1894; the rest of the country became the East African Protectorate in 1895 after the British government revoked the charter of the Imperial British East Africa Company. The British did not want this area, but were forced to take it in order to have access to Uganda and the upper Nile. Work on the construction of a railway line from the coast to Uganda started in 1896. The railway was built not to improve communications with Uganda, but to provide easier access to the Sudan, as the French threat loomed ever larger. By the time the line was finally completed in 1901, the need for it had passed. A casual observer not knowing the history and background to its construction would be mystified by a railway line that ran for thousands of kilometres through sparsely populated bush country to end in an equally unpromising and barren part of Africa. By 1901 Britain had little more than the railway line in Kenya to show for its presence.

**The Anglo-French confrontation at Fashoda**

The closest that any two major European powers came to going to war during the partitioning of Africa was the Fashoda crisis in the Sudan. The actual crisis was played out against a background of strong international rivalry and competition. There was no central coordination of French policy, and the aim of striking a blow at England in the Sudan came from the permanent officials who had throughout been somewhat combative towards England. They hoped that decisive action in the Sudan would somehow force Britain to reopen the whole Egyptian question. Just how this would happen they did not explain. The French intended approaching the Sudan from two sides. Captain Jean Baptiste Marchand would lead an expedition from the west, while another move would be made from the east. It would seem that French designs on the Sudan had taken form by 1894. Britain was aware of French interest in the Sudan and, as we have seen, in negotiations with Germany in 1890 and Leopold in 1894 it had made attempts to thwart French moves.

Salisbury was prepared to play a waiting game in the Sudan, believing that the Mahdi’s power would soon disintegrate. In the meantime his dervishes posed no threat to the Nile. When they eventually did reconquer the Sudan, Salisbury envisaged an advance from the south rather than the north, along the railway line that was being constructed
between Mombasa and Uganda. The threat from the French also seemed to be in the south of the Sudan. Thus little thought was given to an advance from the north.

The Italian defeat at Adowa changed this. The Italians expected that Menelik would follow up his attack, and that the Mahdists in the Sudan would make common cause with them and capture Kassala from the Italians. They therefore appealed to Britain to create a diversion on the Nile to relieve the pressure on them. At first Salisbury was not disposed to rescue the Italians, but then Germany appealed to Britain. Germany was afraid that, if Italy did not receive support, it would regard its membership of the Triple Alliance as useless, and would withdraw from it. The years immediately preceding this were marked by some considerable suspicion of Britain in German circles, and Germany’s support for Kruger reflected this. There had been a number of niggling incidents such as the one in 1894 over Leopold’s corridor, which really angered the Germans. But the Kaiser’s telegram to Kruger after the Jameson Raid failed to have the desired effect because of the vigorous British response and an improvement in Anglo-French relations. By March 1896 Germany wanted to resume more normal relations with Britain.

Strained relations with Britain had brought about no significant advantages for Germany, and in fact they had led recently to a warming of Anglo-French relations. Now the Italian defeat had rocked the Triple Alliance. Germany was therefore prepared to settle its differences amicably with Britain, but only if Britain would support the Triple Alliance and break off its flirtation with France. In Germany’s view, a British advance into the Sudan would destroy the rapprochement with France and demonstrate that support.

As far as Salisbury was concerned, this changed everything. Salisbury did not want Britain to be isolated against an unfriendly Germany, particularly as a real improvement in relations with the French did not seem possible while Egypt divided them. German support for an invasion of the Sudan would make an advance from the north possible: Germany would support it in the caisse, so that the invasion would not cost the taxpayer anything. The soldiers would be those of the Egyptian army, led by their sirdar, Herbert Kitchener. What also bothered Salisbury was the report that Menelik and the French were working together – this added another threat to the Nile. In the event, the danger from this quarter did not materialise.

The British invasion started on 12 March 1896; three months later, on 25 June 1896, Marchand set sail from France. Initially Salisbury did not envisage conquering the Sudan, but merely creating a diversion. But pressure from Kitchener, together with the threat that the khedive would not support the expedition if it did not result in the regaining of Egypt’s Sudanean colony, by degrees brought Salisbury to accept a fullscale conquest. The money from the caisse was insufficient to provide for this, mainly because of determined opposition of the Russian and French representatives on that body to further funds being released for the invasion. Salisbury was not prepared to conduct an invasion on a shoestring budget as another debacle such as that which had led to Gordon’s death in 1885 was to be avoided at all costs. He would take no chances.
Kitchener’s men were constructing a railroad as they progressed, and this was very expensive. It was also very slow as they could not construct much more than a kilometre of line a day. This slow progress meant that they would not reach Fashoda before the French, but clearly with a railway line to back them up the British claim to effective occupation would be very strong.

When the caisse stopped the subsidy, Salisbury did not believe there would be enough money for an advance to Khartoum. But the British parliament surprised him with its jingoism and its enthusiasm for the reconquest of the Sudan and voted £800 000. By this time public opinion was fully caught up on an emotional tide in favour of imperialistic policies.

Although it had initially been hoped that it would not be necessary to use British troops and that the Egyptian troops would suffice, Salisbury agreed to give Kitchener 8 000 British troops to help speed up his advance and conquer the dervishes, who were putting up a surprisingly fierce resistance, despite the fact that they had to keep the bulk of their force near the capital of Omdurman where it could be fed; there was not enough food in the narrow Nile valley to feed the large number of dervishes.

Salisbury had initially banked on an advance from the south. It was for this reason that a start had been made in 1896 with a railway line from the east coast to Uganda. The construction of the line had not proceeded as quickly as had been hoped. Although a force under the command of Claude Macdonald had been dispatched from this direction, it eventually had to turn back when it was still over 800 km away from Fashoda. By the end of 1897 Salisbury had already realised that Macdonald would not succeed.

Marchand arrived at Fashoda on 10 July 1898 with 7 Frenchmen and 120 Senegalese. The British advance reached a climax near Omdurman on 2 September 1898 when the Mahdist cavalry was shattered in a classic set battle piece, one of the few in the partitioning era. The dervishes lost 11 000 men and 368 of Kitchener’s force were killed.

Shortly afterwards Kitchener and Marchand faced each other at Fashoda. Both men acted courteously and allowed the politicians in Europe to sort out affairs. Marchand said that he could not retire without orders to do so, but he did not object when Kitchener hoisted the Egyptian flag.

Salisbury had the upper hand throughout. As Robinson and Gallagher have written: ‘Salisbury’s position was both simple and strong. He held all the cards. The British had conquered the Sudan. Kitchener had an army, Marchand had seven Frenchmen marooned by the banks of the Nile; Salisbury had a united government, Delcassé had a tottering ministry; Britain had a navy ready for war, France had a pack of legal arguments. So the British demand was that Marchand should go, without quibbles or face-saving. Delcassé on the other hand, was playing from weakness, as he well knew. “We have nothing but arguments and they have got troops”, as he put it.’

In the end the French gave in. ‘At first sight,’ Robinson and Gallagher have reflected, ‘there is a certain absurdity about the struggle for Fashoda. The massive advance of Kitchener’s army took two and a half years, and it ended by browbeating a few men
marooned by the side of the Nile. There was a strange disproportion between ends and means, as there was in building two railways from points two thousand miles apart to run into the deserts of the Upper Nile. A still deeper absurdity seems to lie in the French speculation about damming the river and in the labours of the British to stop them ... The greatest absurdity of all might seem to be that for two months two great Powers stood at the brink of war for the ownership of the sudd and desert of the Upper Nile.  

Public opinion in Britain was very much behind the government, but the government did not act because of that. It might have strengthened the government to know that it had the wholehearted support of the man in the street, but the policy of excluding rivals was based on defence of British interests as seen by the policy-makers.

Fashoda, Professor G. N. Sanderson has indicated, was a miscalculation by France. In real terms France would have gained nothing from a British withdrawal from Egypt, since Egyptian security depended largely on naval superiority in the Red Sea area, which Britain had and France did not. But if the French could have forced Britain to retire from Egypt it would have enhanced French prestige enormously, and Britain would have lost prestige. Once France had made it a question of prestige, the British also regarded it as such. Sanderson writes that: 'Ultimately, the quarrel was not about Fashoda, or about the fate of the Sudan, or even about the security of the Nile waters and of Egypt; it was about the relative status of Britain and France as Powers.'

The French did not realise how important the British regarded the area. The problem was that there was no central control of French policy; the Marchand expedition was the brainchild of certain permanent officials, a small clique in French public life. As Sanderson puts it: 'The Marchand Mission was not, either in its origin or in the form which it finally took, the policy of Gabriel Hanotaux, the minister who was officially responsible for it during most of its existence. It was strongly supported by the Comité de l'Afrique Française; but it was in essence the policy of military officers and, more important, of high permanent officials who were by the tradition of their service extremely combative toward England and over-ready to assert French prestige by intensifying competition between the two countries ... That the British would react to it in this way was evidently a complete surprise to the French, and especially to the permanent officials who were so often the real policy makers. Whether their surprise ought to have been so complete is another question. But the flat refusal of the British to negotiate, and their evident willingness to back that refusal by force of arms, at once threw French policy into a disarray from which it was quite unable to recover.' Henri Brunschwig puts it another way. He says: 'If one adds up the more or less explicit mental reservations of some, the hesitation of others, the false appreciations of men who were unable to measure the responsibilities undertaken in an operation which was, in relation to the whole of foreign policy, of secondary importance, it is easy to understand how the crisis broke out without its having been intended.' Hanotaux, the foreign minister, was initially opposed to Marchand's plan, but he did not approve or condemn it – he hedged. The French president, Felix Faure, said: 'We have been like fools in Africa, letting ourselves be dragged on by those irresponsible colonialists.'
Victory over the French 'aggression' became, for British opinion, a test of Britain's strength and effectiveness, a test of its imperial greatness. In the 1890s imperial theorists spoke much more about the economic necessity of taking places that could be exploited, so that the economic motive was put forward more strongly even than it had been in the 1880s. But, with the exception of southern Africa, in the 1890s economic considerations seem to have played a relatively small role in the acquisition of colonies. Economic motives had not featured prominently in the diplomatic settlements of the early 1890s with Germany and Italy. In West Africa Chamberlain was not worried so much at the loss of places from which economic benefit might be derived as he was about the French staking claims in areas that he thought ought to be British - in other words, in what he regarded as British hinterlands. In the middle of 1898 he was ready to risk war over places in West Africa that had no economic importance at all. It was not prospects of economic gain that stirred Chamberlain, but the prospect of French advances.

At the start of the partition process, as we have seen, imperialism was a matter for the policy-making elites, for highly placed civil servants and naval and army officers. It was not a creed of the masses. In Germany, as well as in Britain, fervent nationalism and imperialism often went hand in hand, but not in France, where many nationalists felt that colonial adventures distracted from the real task of regaining the lost provinces. Only occasionally did the two merge, as in Brazza's campaign in 1882 to have his treaty ratified.

But towards the end of the partitioning this changed. Sanderson writes that the dissemination of acquisitive imperialism appears 'to have been a result rather than a cause of the scramble'. As the partitioning neared its end and entered the era of the classic 'steeple-chases' for effective occupation in those West African and Nilotic regions that had not been effectively claimed, there was something like a mass conversion to an aggressive imperialism that was strongly infused with Social Darwinist ideas. By the late 1890s the Liberal Party was almost as imperialistic as the Tories. This new fervour was not confined to politicians but affected a broad spectrum of people, from the universities and learned societies to the armed forces and merchants in chambers of commerce. This fervour was reflected in the way that Stanley was lionised in 1890, Lugard in 1892-1893, Rhodes in 1894-1895 and Kitchener in 1898-1899.

In both Britain and France, by the later 1890s emotions bordered on the hysterical. Omdurman was treated by the British as if it were a major victory, and the French acted as if the national existence of France depended on Fashoda. As far as the French were concerned, what had begun as a 'diplomatic game' had changed, and British refusal to observe the rules of the game at Fashoda threw French foreign policy into disarray. The change in the nature of the game was chiefly the result of the melodramatic incidents and chases that occurred in the final years of the scramble, such as the race for the upper Niger and Fashoda. Expansionist-minded French civil servants and army officers had the support of the colonialist movement, known to contemporaries as the parti colonial. They emerged as a powerful pressure group only in the early 1890s. They never became an organised party and at no time did their numbers exceed about 10,000,
but they were able to exert pressure by virtue of their membership of one of the numerous societies that had some specific interest in colonies. The members themselves were mainly missionaries, businessmen, politicians, servicemen and academics. At the core of the colonial group in the Chamber of Deputies was the Comité de l’Afrique Française and the head of this inner core was Eugène Etienne, under-colonial secretary from 1887 to 1888 and again from 1889 to 1892. In the French cabinet the colonial party usually had the sympathy, and sometimes the support, of the foreign minister. Delcassé was a great colonialist in the 1890s.

The parti colonial enjoyed success in the 1890s because it was able to count on the support of French nationalists. Before the 1890s most nationalists were still opposed to colonial expansion, arguing that colonial adventures diverted French attention from the main task of maintaining France’s position in Europe, that it weakened France by drawing away vital troops and resources from Europe. But in the 1890s, when continental rivalry and overseas expansion became inextricably linked, the nationalists supported expansion. ‘For France, unlike her main European rivals,’ write Andrew and Kanya-Forstner, ‘the nineteenth century was a period of relative decline. Perhaps as a result of that decline, public opinion, especially in Paris where it had most influence on government, was peculiarly sensitive to any slight to French prestige ... The parti colonial could not make public opinion colonialist. But at moments of crisis it could none the less enlist public support for overseas expansion by presenting colonial issues as questions of national prestige.’

As the partitioning progressed, it increasingly became a contest between the European powers. The African adventures now became an extension of European rivalries in Europe, and the colonial scene became more important to the French public, not because of the colonies, but because of this rivalry and the prestige of France. This tendency may have been more marked in France, but it certainly was not absent in Britain either, and in 1898 the British public was howling for French blood as much as their French cousins on the other side of the channel were howling for British blood.

Another significant factor was the influence of the fashionable ‘scientific’ Social Darwinism with its belief in the racial superiority of Europe. Pseudo-scientific racial theories about the superiority of the European race, reflected in Social Darwinism, seem to have been rather a late development and were used to justify previous annexations rather than cited as a reason why Europe partitioned Africa. In terms of this theory Charles Darwin’s *The origin of species by means of natural selection or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life*, published in 1859, seemed to some people to provide scientific support for the notion that the European race was superior to other races. They saw the conquest of ‘backward races’ by ‘superior’ Europeans as part of the process of ‘natural selection’, with the stronger dominating the weaker. The partition of Africa with its many conquests was thus seen as a natural and inevitable process. Pseudo-scientific racism was at its height in the period between about 1880 and 1920.

While this Social Darwinism can hardly be regarded as a cause of the partition, it did serve to justify the conquests that had already been made, or were about to be made.
There was no better way for a Social Darwinist to demonstrate this superiority than to use armed force to crush ‘inferior races’. And at the same time as indigenous rulers and peoples became more aware of the implications of creeping European control over them, and became more determined to resist further encroachment, European bodies, whether settlers, soldiers or governments at home, were not prepared to tolerate opposition. In terms of Social Darwinist ideology, African resistance was a threat to the prestige of the powers, and success against these forces was seen as a crucial test of a power’s strength and virility. Thus while colonial control was initially to be secured with a minimum of force and expense, in the late stages of the scramble the racial arrogance of Europe, combined with nationalist rivalry and self-assertion, resulted in African resistance being met with overwhelming force. Although the motives for such force varied, except for southern Africa, the economic motive was not usually dominant. In the upper Nile economic motives hardly counted. ‘But one motive was always present, and was always very important: the desire to demonstrate, in the most crushing possible way, the “superiority” of the European.’

Although the confrontation at Fashoda nearly led to war between Britain and France, Brunschwig believes that Anglophobia on the part of the French or sections of French officialdom should be seen in perspective and that Anglophobia ‘was rather a patriotic desire to see France demonstrate its prowess than a fear of hate of Britain. Fear and hate were reserved for Germany.’ He points out that: ‘Historians, basing themselves on press polemics, may have been led to believe that the Fashoda incident brought France and Britain to the edge of war. But in fact it produced the “Entente Cordiale” of 1904. This agreement was negotiated by the former Anglophobe colonial minister, Delcassé, who had become an Anglophile foreign minister since he could not be anything but a Germanophobe.’

Once tempers had cooled and there was a more realistic appraisal of France’s vital interests, an Anglo-French agreement was signed in March 1899 in which the Nile basin and its western tributary, the Bahr al-Ghazal, were recognised as a British sphere.

In the next few years Britain and France moved closer to one another, as Britain increasingly saw the dangers of being at variance with both France and Germany at the same time, while France came to appreciate that its alliance with Russia was not an adequate safeguard of its security in Europe. The Entente Cordiale was a comprehensive colonial settlement in which the watershed of the Nile and Congo became the dividing line between French and British interests.

For many years Britain had worked to keep Morocco independent and introduce internal reforms, but this policy had not succeeded. The sultan’s government was on the verge of collapse, and in the 1904 agreement Britain gave France a free hand in Morocco in return for recognition of Britain’s position in Egypt. To a certain extent the decision on the French side was the result of a realistic appreciation that Egyptian finances had improved to such an extent by this time that French obstruction on the caisse was not so effective as it had once been. In the arrangement now made the caisse
would remain in force but it would lose a number of its functions, so that it would no longer hamper British freedom of action in Egypt.

**Morocco**

The sultan mulay Hassan succeeded in avoiding the trap of huge foreign loans that had led to the downfall of the indigenous regimes in Egypt and Tunis, but he could not prevent Europeans from increasing their hold on the economic life of Morocco. There was regular contact between the ports of Tangier and Casablanca and Liverpool, Marseilles and Hamburg. If the Moroccan economy had been sound, it may have been possible to limit outside influences, but in the 1870s the flourishing wool and wheat trade of the 1860s declined somewhat as a result of increasing international competition from Australia and North America.

Matters took a turn for the worse when Hassan died in 1894, for his son, who was still a boy, was weak and easily influenced. This, together with the fact that in 1904 Britain recognised French predominance in Morocco, did not augur well for the continued independence of the country.

Between 1905 and 1911 Morocco was at the centre of an international dispute on three occasions. David Thomson wrote that the Moroccan crises provided a 'vivid illustration of how relatively minor colonial issues could set the powers snarling at one another in the decade before war began. But it also shows how such issues were resolutely resolved and kept subordinate to considerations that most of the powers regarded as their more vital national interests.'

German interests in Morocco had been increasing steadily, and by 1904 German trade with Morocco was very nearly equal to that of France. The Anglo-French entente made Germany nervous about its general security in Europe, while more specifically it seemed very much like an attempt to squeeze Germany out of Morocco. So the Kaiser decided to do something about it, to see whether he could break up the entente and drive a wedge between Britain and France. At the end of March 1905 he visited Tangier and let it be known that he regarded Morocco as an independent country, and that Germany would take exception to the attempts of any power to assume control over it. When the French foreign minister, Delcassé, who was preparing the way for the French takeover of Morocco, failed to fall in with the German suggestion of a conference on Morocco, the Germans let it be known that while he remained in office Franco-German relations would remain strained. Delcassé resigned, but that was the only victory for the Germans, for the heavy-handed German action humiliated and antagonised Frenchmen and, far from driving a wedge between France and Britain, it strengthened the entente as British sympathy for France increased. Thomson described this Moroccan crisis as 'the beginning of a long series of diplomatic blunders on the part of the Kaiser and, even more, of his chancellor, Prince von Bülow – blunders in the double sense that they had results the very opposite to what Germany intended, and that they greatly increased the accumulating fears and distrusts which precipitated war'.

248 PART 1: CHAPTER 9
At the Algeciras Conference, held in January 1906 at the insistence of Von Bülow, German attempts to isolate France backfired. The fact that Italy gave her backing to France revealed the weakness of the Triple Alliance while the Anglo-French entente was strengthened. In 1908 there was another international crisis. This resulted in a Franco-German agreement in 1909, which recognised the political preponderance of France in Morocco. In the same agreement, France promised Germany equality as far as economic matters were concerned. In 1911, when the French occupied Fez in response to an appeal from the mulay Hafiz, who was besieged in his capital by rebels, the Germans demanded 'compensation' and sent a gunboat to Agadir, ostensibly to protect German interests. In return for German recognition of the French position in Morocco, Germany wanted France to make concessions to it in the French Congo. With Britain's support, France refused, and for a while feelings ran high and a compromise seemed unlikely. Russia, however, encouraged France to make the concessions. In 1907 Russia had joined Britain and France in the Triple Entente, which replaced the Entente Cordiale, and the last thing it wanted was a war with Germany over Morocco, especially as it had just reached agreement with Germany about the construction of railways in the Near East. After months of negotiation an agreement was signed in November 1911 whereby Germany accepted the right of France to establish a protectorate in Morocco in return for the cession to Germany of two strips of the French Congo, which were then joined to Kamerun to give the colony river outlets.

Thus did the nature of imperialism change as the partitioning entered its final phases, with nationalism and imperialism becoming inextricably entwined. International rivalry and politics gave direction to the chase for colonies as inland borders were drawn.

Notes
7. Ibid.

12 Robinson & Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, p. 371.

13 Ibid., p. 376.


17 Quoted by Hallett, Africa since 1875, p. 99.


19 Ibid., p. 155.

20 Ibid.


24 D. Thomson, Europe since Napoleon, p. 520.

25 Ibid.