

Features of imperialism

Imperialism refers to the struggle for the partitioning of the world by the most powerful European nations. This struggle was extremely prominent between 1870 and 1914, a period that scholars refer to as “The Age of Imperialism”.

However, imperialism is not a modern phenomenon. It has its roots in a series of conquests that began with that of America in the 16th century, and which continued right up to the first decades of the 19th century. If this initial phase of colonization happened over many centuries, a second and most recent phase of colonization - already referred to as the Age of Imperialism - happened within a few decades, and resulted in the European colonial powers gaining control over most of the world, especially in Africa and in Asia.

Between 1870 and 1914 about one fifth of the world’s land surface was annexed by the colonial powers of Europe. If this later phase of colonial expansion was characterized by military and political control, requiring a significant and direct intervention by the European states and the USA, the earlier form of colonialism sought to achieve its aims by means of economic penetration. Whilst this “traditional” form of colonialism aimed to control the areas that were most relevant to their economic exploitation, the later colonial struggle between the great European powers was for the control of entire regions.

From Bianco-Schmitt, “Civil History in English 2”, Pearson Italia, Milano-Torino, 2019

1. Match the following words to their corresponding definitions.

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|-----------------|--|
| 1. Scholar | a. A state with power and influence in the international forum |
| 2. Expansionism | b. A learned person |
| 3. State | c. A division into parts |
| 4. Colonialism | d. An internationally recognised territory that is united under a government |
| 5. Partition | e. A policy of territorial annexations |
| 6. Great Power | f. The policy of extending a state’s rule over another state or territory |

2. Check your understanding. Are these statements true or false? Correct the false statements.

a. Imperialism refers to the annexation of territories by the Great Powers. T F

b. Imperialism took place between 1492 and 1789. T F

c. Imperialism had no precedents. T F

3. Complete the table, underlying the differences between the first and the second phase of colonization.

FIRST FASE OF COLONIZATION	SECOND PHASE OF COLONIZATION

4. Complete the following map about imperialism with the lacking informations.

