



## ABSTRACT

The first embassies were founded in the 13th century, and early modern diplomacy in Europe is frequently credited to the Northern Italian powers during the early Renaissance. This study seeks to review Diplomacy in the Era of Industrial Revolution and Colonialism as well as the implications for African states. The data for this study were collected from

# A REVIEW OF DIPLOMACY IN THE ERA OF INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND COLONIALISM: IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICA

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## Introduction

The word diplomacy, which is a transcription from Greek, refers to the art and practice of negotiating between representatives of the participating governments in order to reach a legally binding agreement with other nations. When we talk about international diplomacy, we mean the practice of conducting international relations via the mediation of professional diplomats on matters pertaining to human rights, commerce, conflict, economy, culture, the environment, and peacemaking. Before being approved by national legislators, international treaties are often negotiated by diplomats. Diplomacy, in a social or informal meaning, is the use of tact to get a competitive edge or to resolve a shared problem in a way that is acceptable to both parties. One tool in this toolbox is the use of non-confrontational or courteous language while making remarks (Barston 2006).

The first embassies were founded in the 13th century, and early modern diplomacy in Europe is frequently credited to the Northern Italian powers during the early



secondary sources such textbooks, journal articles and internet sources while content analysis was used to analysed data collected. The study is situated within the context of conflict theory. This study argues that the diplomatic relations between European powers during the era of Industrial Revolution and Colonialism was designed to favour the former while the later continue to suffer from exploitation and subjugation from the former. This study further argues that African nations during colonial era do not have control over their resources let alone the pattern of diplomatic relations between Africa and their colonial masters which has consequences on contemporary relations with modern African states.

**Keywords:** Revolution, Colonialism, State, Diplomacy

Renaissance. Particularly under Francesco Sforza, who opened permanent embassies in the other Northern Italian city republics, Milan took the lead. Beginning in the 14th century, Venice and Tuscany were also thriving diplomatic hubs. Many of the customs of contemporary diplomacy, such presenting an ambassador's credentials to the head of state, originated on the Italian Peninsula. Other parts of Europe adopted the practice after Italy. In 1455, Milan was the first to send a delegate to the French court.

However, out of concern about spying and the possibility that the French delegates might meddle in its domestic matters, Milan declined to receive them. The need to receive emissaries was acknowledged as foreign nations like France and Spain became more active in Italian affairs. The main European nations soon began trading delegates. The first country to send a permanent representation was Spain, which in 1487 dispatched an ambassador to the Court of England. It was common practice to establish permanent missions by the late 16th century. However, the Holy Roman Emperor did not frequently send permanent delegates since they were unable to represent the interests of all the German princes, who were all autonomous in practice but theoretically subservient to the Emperor (Chaplais, 2003).

Besides, Italian nations placed a great deal of importance on their relations with the Ottoman government, which they referred to as the Sublime Porte. The



maritime republics of Venice and Genoa relied more and more on maintaining cordial connections with the Ottomans and less and less on their naval prowess. Between the Ottoman and Italian empires, interactions between different merchants, diplomats, and religious leaders contributed to the establishment and development of new types of statecraft and diplomacy. Originally employed as a negotiator, the diplomat's main function eventually changed to represent an independent state in all spheres of political life.

The rise of the Ottoman Empire's strong political climate made it clear that all other sovereigns felt compelled to make diplomatic concessions (Goffman 2004). One may conclude that adherence to Ottoman culture served as the cornerstone of the diplomatic climate of the early modern era. The principles of contemporary diplomacy were refined throughout that time. The ambassador was the highest ranking representative. An ambassador was a nobleman at the time, and the position of the nobleman appointed to a country varied according to its renown. Ambassadors must meet strict requirements, such as having spacious homes, throwing extravagant parties, and participating actively in the court life of their host country. In Rome, the most desirable assignment for a Catholic ambassador, the French and Spanish ministers would have a retinue of up to a hundred. Ambassadors were costly, even in lower positions. A level below ambassadors, envoys were sent and received by smaller governments. The role of minister plenipotentiary fell somewhere in the middle.

Even then, diplomacy was a complicated matter. Each state's ambassadors were arranged according to intricate and hotly debated degrees of precedence. States were often ranked according to the title of the sovereign; the Vatican's ambassador was the most important for Catholic states, followed by those from kingdoms, duchies, and principalities. Republic representatives were given the lowest ranking, which frequently infuriated the leaders of the several German, Scandinavian, and Italian republics. There was almost continual bickering since priority between two kingdoms was determined by a variety of variables that frequently changed.

Furthermore, large embassy staffs were required to assist ambassadors, who were nobility with little foreign experience and no aspirations to pursue a career in diplomacy. These experts would have significantly greater expertise of the host nation than the higher-ranking officials and would be assigned to lengthier missions. Embassy staff would include a wide range of employees, including some



dedicated to espionage. Universities across Europe saw a significant rise in the study of international law, modern languages, and history as a result of the demand for qualified personnel to staff embassies, which was filled by university graduates (Goffman 2004).

Almost all European nations started establishing permanent foreign ministries at the same time in order to manage embassies and their personnel. Many of these ministries had unnecessary internal duties, and they were nevertheless very different from their current forms. Up to 1782, Britain had two departments with often-overlapping jurisdiction. Additionally, they were much smaller than they are now. In the 1780s, France, which had the biggest foreign affairs department, only employed around 70 people full-time.

By the early 18th century, the components of contemporary diplomacy had made their way to Russia and Eastern Europe. The French Revolution and the years of war that followed would significantly disturb the overall structure. Commonsers would take over the French state's diplomacy during the revolution, as would those overrun by revolutionary forces. Priority ranks were eliminated. Napoleon also jailed a number of British ambassadors who were suspected of plotting against France because he refused to recognise diplomatic immunity.

The Congress of Vienna in 1815 created an international system of diplomatic status following Napoleon's downfall. First discussed at the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818, disputes about national precedence (and hence the proper diplomatic ranks to employ) continued for more than a century until World War II, when the rank of ambassador became the standard. People like Otto von Bismarck, the German chancellor, were well-known for their foreign diplomacy during the period (Barston 2006).

The late 18th century saw the start of the Industrial Revolution in Western Europe, which fundamentally changed the Western European Powers and gave them a decisive edge over less industrialised countries. As a result, the dynamics of international relations between the Western European Powers and their non-industrialized counterparts were altered. When Western European Powers expanded their technological and economic advantages over non-industrial societies, they were able to dominate and control previously unconquerable territory, which led to the eventual invasion and colonisation of most of the world and the entrenchment of capitalist economic relations worldwide. This process created intense rivalry among the major Western European Powers and



necessitated the use of treaties between them and the rulers of the territories they claimed. The Industrial Revolution unleashed economic forces that brought many issues that had not been considered factors in international relations came to the fore a result.

On the whole, the primary focus of this paper will be the role of diplomacy as a separate area of state activity from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution to the height of the movement for the acquisition of colonies in the late 19th century. By the end of World War II, the Western European Powers had all but destroyed themselves and had become satellites of the two major Super Powers, the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This resulted in the establishment of the international framework for decolonisation and the end of the European Powers' direct control over their empires.

### Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Conflict theory. It was argued by Robert J. C. Young that imperialism is the concept while colonialism is the practice. Colonialism is based on an imperial outlook, thereby creating a consequential relationship (Young, 2000). Through an empire, colonialism is established and capitalism is expanded, on the other hand a capitalist economy naturally enforces an empire. In the next section Marxists make a case for this mutually reinforcing relationship. Marxism views colonialism as a form of capitalism, enforcing exploitation and social change. Marx thought that working within the global capitalist system, colonialism is closely associated with uneven development. It is an "instrument of wholesale destruction, dependency and systematic exploitation producing distorted economies, socio-psychological disorientation, massive poverty and neocolonial dependency." Colonies are constructed into modes of production. The search for raw materials and the current search for new investment opportunities is a result of inter-capitalist rivalry for capital accumulation (Gallaher, 2008).

Lenin regarded colonialism as the root cause of imperialism, as imperialism was distinguished by monopoly capitalism via colonialism and as Lyal S. Sunga explains: "Vladimir Lenin advocated forcefully the principle of self-determination of peoples in his "Theses on the Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" as an integral plank in the program of socialist internationalism" and he quotes Lenin who contended that "The right of nations to self-determination implies exclusively the right to independence in the political sense,



the right to free political separation from the oppressor nation. Specifically, this demand for political democracy implies complete freedom to agitate for secession and for a referendum on secession by the seceding nation." Non-Russian Marxists within the RSFSR and later the USSR, like Sultan Galiev and Vasyl Shakhrai. Meanwhile, between 1918 and 1923 and then after 1929, considered the Soviet Regime a renewed version of the Russian imperialism and colonialism (Sunga, 2002).

In his critique of colonialism in Africa, the Guyanese historian and political activist Walter Rodney states:

The decisiveness of the short period of colonialism and its negative consequences for Africa, spring mainly from the fact that Africa lost power; Power is the ultimate determinant in human society, being basic to the relations within any group and between groups. It implies the ability to defend one's interests and if necessary to impose one's will by any means available. In relations between peoples, the question of power determines maneuverability in bargaining, the extent to which one people respect the interests of another, and eventually the extent to which a people survive as a physical and cultural entity. When one society finds itself forced to relinquish power entirely to another society that in itself is a form of underdevelopment ... During the centuries of pre-colonial trade, some control over social political and economic life was retained in Africa, in spite of the disadvantageous commerce with Europeans. That little control over internal matters disappeared under colonialism. Colonialism went much further than trade. It meant a tendency towards direct appropriation by Europeans of the social institutions within Africa. Africans ceased to set indigenous cultural goals and standards, and lost full command of training young members of the society. Those were undoubtedly major steps backwards ... Colonialism was not merely a system of exploitation, but one whose essential purpose was to repatriate the profits to the so-called 'mother country'. From an African viewpoint, that amounted to consistent expatriation of surplus produced by African labor out of African resources. It meant the development of Europe as part of the same dialectical process in which Africa was underdeveloped."(Rodney, 1975).





On the whole, colonial Africa fell within that part of the international capitalist economy from which surplus was drawn to feed the metropolitan sector. As seen earlier, exploitation of land and labor is essential for human social advance, but only on the assumption that the product is made available within the area where the exploitation takes place.

### **The Berlin Conference and European Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Industrial Revolution**

The Berlin Conference of 1884–85, also known as the Congo Conference or the West Africa Conference, regulated European colonization and trade in Africa during the New Imperialism period, and coincided with Germany's sudden emergence as an imperial power. Called for by Portugal and organized by Otto von Bismarck, first Chancellor of Germany, its outcome, the General Act of the Berlin Conference, can be seen as the formalization of the Scramble for Africa. The conference ushered in a period of heightened colonial activity by European powers, which eliminated or overrode most existing forms of African autonomy and self-governance (Murriel, 1999).

Before the conference, European diplomacy treated African indigenous people in the same manner as the New World natives, forming trading relationships with tribal chiefs. By the mid-19th century, Europeans considered Africa to be disputed territory ripe for exploration, trade, and settlement by their colonists. With the exception of trading posts along the coasts, the continent was essentially ignored. Some historians argue that this change was brought about by King Leopold of Belgium's desire for glory.

In 1878, King Leopold II of Belgium, who had previously founded the International African Society in 1876, invited Henry Morton Stanley to join him in researching and "civilizing" the continent. In 1878, the International Congo Society was also formed, with more economic goals, but still closely related to the former society. Léopold secretly bought off the foreign investors in the Congo Society, which was turned to imperialistic goals, with the African Society serving primarily as a philanthropic front (Murriel, 1999).

From 1878 to 1885, Stanley returned to the Congo, not as a reporter but as an envoy from Léopold with the secret mission to organize what would become known as the Congo Free State. French intelligence had discovered Leopold's plans, and France quickly engaged in its own colonial exploration. French naval



officer Pierre de Brazza was dispatched to central Africa, traveled into the western Congo basin, and raised the French flag over the newly founded Brazzaville in 1881, in what is currently the Republic of Congo. Finally, Portugal, which already had a long, but essentially abandoned colonial Empire in the area through the mostly defunct proxy state Kongo Empire, also claimed the area. Its claims were based on old treaties with its former proxy, the Kingdom of Spain, and the Roman Catholic Church. It quickly made a treaty on 26 February 1884 with its former ally, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, to block off the Congo Society's access to the Atlantic.

By the early 1880s, due to many factors including diplomatic maneuvers, subsequent colonial exploration, and recognition of Africa's abundance of valuable resources such as gold, timber, land, markets and labor power, European interest in the continent had increased dramatically. Stanley's charting of the Congo River Basin (1874–77) removed the last *terra incognita* from European maps of the continent, and delineating the areas of British, Portuguese, French, and Belgian control. The powers raced to push these rough boundaries to their furthest limits and eliminate any potential local minor powers which might prove troublesome to European competitive diplomacy.

France moved to occupy Tunisia, one of the last of the Barbary Pirate states, under the pretext of another piracy incident. French claims by Pierre de Brazza were quickly solidified with French taking control of today's Republic of the Congo in 1881 and Guinea in 1884. Italy became part of the Triple Alliance, upsetting Bismarck's carefully laid plans with the state and forcing Germany to become involved in Africa. In 1882, realizing the geopolitical extent of Portuguese control on the coasts, but seeing penetration by France eastward across Central Africa toward Ethiopia, the Nile, and the Suez Canal, Britain saw its vital trade route through Egypt and its Indian Empire threatened.

On the whole, under the pretext of the collapsed Egyptian financing and a subsequent riot, in which hundreds of Europeans and British subjects were murdered or injured, the United Kingdom intervened in nominally Ottoman Egypt. Through it, the UK also ruled over the Sudan and what would later become British Somaliland (Crowe, 1942).

Owing to the European race for colonies, Germany started launching expeditions of its own, which frightened both British and French statesmen. Hoping to quickly soothe this brewing conflict, King Leopold II convinced France and Germany that





common trade in Africa was in the best interests of all three countries. Under support from the British and the initiative of Portugal, Otto von Bismarck, German Chancellor, called on representatives of Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden-Norway (union until 1905), the Ottoman Empire and the United States to take part in the Berlin Conference in 1884 to work out joint policy on the African continent. The General Act fixed the following points:

- a. To gain public acceptance, the conference resolved to end slavery by Black and Islamic powers. Thus, an international prohibition of the slave trade throughout their respected spheres was signed by the European members. Because of this point the writer Joseph Conrad sarcastically referred to the conference as "the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs" in his novella *Heart of Darkness*.
- b. The Congo Free State was confirmed as the private property of the Congo Society, which supported Leopold's promises to keep the country open to all European investment. The territory of today's Democratic Republic of the Congo, some two million square kilometers, was confirmed by the European powers as essentially the property of Léopold II (but later it was organized as a Belgian colony under state administration).
- c. The 14 signatory powers would have free trade throughout the Congo Basin as well as Lake Nyassa, and east of this in an area south of 5° N.
- d. The Niger and Congo rivers were made free for ship traffic.
- e. A Principle of Effectivity (based on "effective occupation") was introduced to stop powers setting up colonies in name only.
- f. Any fresh act of taking possession of any portion of the African coast would have to be notified by the power taking possession, or assuming a protectorate, to the other signatory powers.
- g. Definition of regions in which each European power had an exclusive right to "pursue" the legal ownership of land (legal in the eyes of the other European powers).
- h. The first reference in an international act to the obligations attaching to "spheres of influence" is contained in the Berlin Act (David et al 2010).

### **Principle of the Berlin Conference and European Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Industrial Revolution**

The principle of effective occupation stated that powers could acquire rights over colonial lands only if they possessed them or had "effective occupation": in other words, if they had treaties with local leaders, if they flew their flag there, and if



they established an administration in the territory to govern it with a police force to keep order. The colonial power could also make use of the colony economically. This principle became important not only as a basis for the European powers to acquire territorial sovereignty in Africa, but also for determining the limits of their respective overseas possessions, as effective occupation served in some instances as a criterion for settling disputes over the boundaries between colonies. But, as the Berlin Act was limited in its scope to the lands that fronted on the African coast, European powers in numerous instances later claimed rights over lands in the interior without demonstrating the requirement of effective occupation, as articulated in Article 35 of the Final Act.

At the Berlin Conference of 1885, the scope of the Principle of Effective Occupation was heavily contested between Germany and France. The Germans, who were new to the continent of Africa, believed that as far as the extension of power in Africa was concerned, no colonial power should have any legal right to a territory, unless the state exercised strong and effective political control. Since Germany was a latecomer to the continent and was unlikely to gain any possessions, it had an interest in embarrassing the other European powers on the continent and forcing them to give up their possessions if they could not muster a strong political presence. On the other side, the United Kingdom (UK) had large territorial "possessions" on the continent and wanted to keep them while minimizing its responsibilities and administrative costs. In the end, the British view prevailed.

The disinclination to rule what the Europeans had "conquered" is apparent throughout the protocols of the Berlin Conference, but especially in "The Principle of Effective Occupation." The powers finally agreed that this could be established by a European power establishing some kind of base on the coast, from which it was free to expand into the interior. The Europeans did not believe that the rules of occupation demanded European Hegemony on the ground. The Belgians originally wanted to include that "effective occupation" required provisions that "cause peace to be administered", but other powers had that amendment struck out of the final document.

This principle, along with others that were written at the Conference allowed the Europeans to "conquer" Africa while doing as little as possible to administer or control it. The Principle of Effective Occupation did not apply so much to the hinterlands of Africa at the time of the conference. This gave rise to "hinterland



theory," which basically gave any colonial power with coastal territory the right to claim political influence over an indefinite amount of inland territory. Since Africa was irregularly shaped, this theory caused problems and was later rejected (Mueller, 1997).

### Major Agenda of the Berlin Conference and European Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Industrial Revolution

- a. **Portugal - Britain:** The Portuguese government presented a project, known as the "Pink Map" (also called the "Rose-Colored Map"), in which the colonies of Angola and Mozambique were united by co-option of the intervening territory (land that later became Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi.) All of the countries attending the conference, *except for the United Kingdom*, endorsed Portugal's ambitions. A little more than five years later, in 1890, the British government, in breach of the Treaty of Windsor (and of the Treaty of Berlin itself), issued an ultimatum demanding that the Portuguese withdraw from the disputed area.
- b. **France - Britain:** A line running from Say in Niger to Baroua, on the north-east coast of Lake Chad determined what part belonged to whom. France would own territory to the north of this line, and the United Kingdom would own territory to the south of it. The Nile Basin would be British, with the French taking the basin of Lake Chad. Furthermore, between the 11th and 15th degrees latitude, the border would pass between Ouaddaï, which would be French, and Darfur in Sudan, to be British. In reality, a no man's land 200 kilometers wide was put in place between the 21st and 23rd meridians.
- c. **France - Germany:** The area to the north of a line formed by the intersection of the 14th meridian and Miltou was designated French, that to the south being German.
- d. **Britain - Germany:** The separation came in the form of a line passing through Yola, on the Benue, Dikoa, going up to the extremity of Lake Chad.
- e. **France - Italy:** Italy was to own what lies north of a line from the intersection of the Tropic of Cancer and the 17th meridian to the intersection of the 15th parallel and 21st meridian (David et al 2010).

### Implications of the Berlin Conference and European Diplomatic Relations in the Age of Industrial Revolution

The conference provided an opportunity to channel latent European hostilities towards one another outward, provide new areas for helping the European Powers expand in the face of rising American, Russian, and Japanese interests,



and form constructive dialogue for limiting future hostilities. For Africans, colonialism was introduced across nearly all the continent. When African independence was regained after World War II, it was in the form of fragmented states (Herrin, 2010).

The Scramble for Africa sped up after the Conference, since even within areas designated as their sphere of influence; the European powers still had to take possession under the Principle of Effectively. In central Africa in particular, expeditions were dispatched to coerce traditional rulers into signing treaties, using force if necessary, as for example in the case of Msiri, King of Katanga, in 1891. Bedouin and Berber ruled states in the Sahara and Sub-Sahara were overrun by the French in several wars by the beginning of World War I. The British moved up from South Africa and down from Egypt conquering Arabic states such as the Mahdist State and the Sultanate of Zanzibar and, (having already defeated the Zulu Kingdom in South Africa, in 1879), moving on to subdue and dismantle the independent Afrikaaner republics of Transvaal and Orange Free State.

Within a few years, Africa was at least nominally divided up south of the Sahara. By 1895, the only independent states were:

- a. Liberia, founded with the support of the United States for returned slaves;
- b. Abyssinia (Ethiopia), the only free native state, which fended off Italian invasion from Eritrea in what is known as the First Italo-Abyssinian War of 1889-1896.
- c. Majeerteen Sultanate, The Sultanate was founded in the early 18th century, it was annexed by Italy in the 20th century.
- d. Sultanate of Hobyo, the Sultanate was carved out of the former Majeerteen Sultanate and ruled northern Somalia until the 20th century, when it was conquered by Italy.

The following states lost their independence to the British Empire roughly a decade after:

- a. Orange Free State, a Boer republic founded by Dutch settlers;
- b. South African Republic (Transvaal), also a Boer republic;

By 1902, 90% of all the land that makes up Africa was under European control. The large part of the Sahara was French, while after the quelling of the Mahdi rebellion and the ending of the Fashoda crisis, the Sudan remained firmly under joint



British–Egyptian rulership with Egypt being under British occupation before becoming a British protectorate in 1914.

The Boer republics were conquered by the United Kingdom in the Boer war from 1899 to 1902. Morocco was divided between the French and Spanish in 1911, and Libya was conquered by Italy in 1912. The official British annexation of Egypt in 1914 ended the colonial division of Africa (Ibid).

By the early years of the 20th century the major imperialist gains had been completed, but some of the excitement that the process had generated remained, to spill back into European diplomacy. Germany had begun construction of a large navy, for example, in the late 1890s, in part to assure its place as an imperialist power; but this development, along with Germany's rapid industrial surge, threatened Britain. France ran a massive empire, but its nationalistic yearnings were not fully satisfied and the humiliating loss of Alsace-Lorraine had not been avenged. Russia encountered a new opponent in the Far East in the rise of Japan. The Japanese, fearful of Russian expansion in northern China, defeated the tsarist forces in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904–05, winning Korea in the process. The unstable Russian regime looked for compensatory gains in the hothouse of the Balkans rather than in the distant reaches of Asia. The stage was set for intensification of European conflicts.

Furthermore, the complex alliance system developed by Bismarck came unraveled following the statesman's removal from power in 1890 at the hands of a new emperor, William II. Germany did not renew its alliance with Russia, and during the 1890s an alliance developed between Russia and France, both fearful of Germany's might. Britain, also wary of German power, swallowed its traditional enmity and colonial rivalries with France, forming a loose Entente Cordiale in 1904; Russia joined this understanding in 1907. Europe stood divided between two alliance systems.

In 1908 Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was eager to strike a blow against South Slavic nationalism, which threatened the multinational Habsburg empire. This move antagonized Russia and Serbia, the latter claiming these territories as part of its own national domain. In 1912 Russia aided several of the Balkan states in a new attack on the Ottoman Empire, with the allies hoping to obtain Macedonia. The Balkan nations won, but they quarreled with each other in the Second Balkan War in 1913. Further bitterness resulted in the Balkan region,



with Serbia, though a winner in both wars, eager to take on Austria-Hungary directly.

On June 28, 1914, Gavrilo Princip, a Serbian nationalist, assassinated the Austrian Archduke and apparent heir to the throne Francis Ferdinand. Austria-Hungary resolved to crush the Serbian threat in response. Germany supported its Austrian ally, partly because it feared that its most reliable partner needed a victory and partly because many leaders judged that war had become inevitable and was preferable sooner than later, given ongoing military modernizations in France and Russia. Russia refused to abandon Serbia, and France hewed to its alliance with Russia. Last-minute negotiations, led by Britain, failed. Russia began a general mobilization following Austria's July 28 attack on Serbia. Germany, eager to take advantage of Russia's slowness by striking a lightning blow in the west, then invaded neutral Belgium and pushed into northern France. Britain, briefly hesitant, was committed by treaty to defend Belgium and entered the fray on August 4, and World War I was under way (Herrin, 2010).

The patterns of European diplomacy in the late 19th century are not an unrelieved story of nationalist rivalries. From the 1850s onward European nations signed a number of constructive international agreements designed to link postal systems, regularize principles of international commercial law, and even install some humanitarian agreements in the event of war. The International Red Cross was one fruit of these activities, as was the establishment of a World Court, in the Netherlands, to help settle international disputes. But efforts to negotiate a reduction of armaments, in a series of conferences beginning in 1899, failed completely amid growing national military buildups. Britain and Germany, in particular, refused to abandon their naval race, which took a new turn in 1906 with the development of the massive British battleship HMS *Dreadnought*.

On the whole, World War I, a bloody struggle that served to reduce Europe's world role, resulted not only from escalating international tensions but also from domestic strains. Russia and Austria-Hungary, internally pressed by social and nationalist strife, looked to diplomatic successes, even at the cost of war, as a means of diverting internal discontents, and the alliance system trapped more stable nations into following suit. Germany, Britain, and France, beleaguered by growing socialist gains that frightened a conservative leadership and urged on by intense popular nationalism, also accepted war not only as a diplomatic tool but also as a means of countering internal disarray. Cultural emphasis on irrationality,





spontaneity, and despair contributed to the context as well. War thus resulted from a number of basic developments in 19th-century Europe, just as its catastrophic impact resulted from the military technologies that the 19th-century industrial revolution had created.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

After the Berlin Conference of 1884/85, Great Power interference in Africa increased. The interference was made possible by the technological and financial advantages the European States possessed when compared to non-Western states. It was exacerbated by the weakness of African state systems as they confronted and tried to come to terms with the significant economic changes wrought in the international economy by the Industrial Revolution which led to the end of the Slave Trade and the increase in the significance of cash crops such as rubber, palm oil and groundnuts among others.

All of a sudden, vested interests that had grown around slave raiding, transporting, housing and eventual export on the African continent for over four hundred years began to become financially unviable. Meanwhile peasant communities existing on land once thought to be unproductive and marginal began to assert their new found economic advantages leaving policy makers in African state systems perplexed by the variety of problems their states were called upon to mediate.

Across the savannah belt of West Africa, Islamic States that incorporated Fulani and Berber nomads and their light cavalry emerged and increasingly pandered to the vested interests that had grown around the Slave Trade and found outlets for such activities across the Sahara. They could not project the power of such vested interests (those vested interest based on the Slave Trade) beyond the confines of the savannah region and their influence upon the forest regions to their south remained limited. Once the European based Trading Companies such as PZ, the RNC, JH etc recognized the potentials of the savannah regions for cash crops; they created the necessary lobbies in their countries for political action and eventually sold the idea of colonizing the savannah and other regions of West Africa in the interests of their home governments.

An overriding factor in all these activities was the relative weakness militarily, financially and with regards to social cohesion of the African state systems viz a viz the Great Powers. Once deployed, Great Power military machines would crush



the armed might of whatever target they were directed against in Africa. They would also elevate segments within the African state system that either cooperated with them or stood out of their way to a higher status in the communities they conquered. This scenario was repeated over and over prior to the formal colonization of most of the African continent.

The amazing thing was that African politicians could not find the basis for countering the Great Powers through an attempt at diplomatic cooperation with each other and fully enfranchising weaker or minority groups within their political communities. They could not appreciate the ennobling quality of ideals developed around ideas such as the abolition of slavery; the equality of citizens; no taxation without representation or entrenching the rule of law and discounting all arbitrariness in the polity. To the extent that African politicians even heard of such ideas among others emanating from the Western experience, they could not fathom how these ideals could become practical political projects for their citizens. The failure by African politicians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to internalize a framework to project such ideals and principles into their political life contributed in no small measure to the success of colonization of Africa by the Europeans after the Berlin Conference of 1884/85. The failure of African politicians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in this regard to succeed where pre-colonial politicians also failed is one of the primary reasons for the weakness of the African post-colonial state.

The weaknesses of existing African states will not be allowed to threaten interests deemed vital to the Western powers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Just as in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this is the lesson all Africa is being taught. But before one concludes that the West should be demonized it is important to note that the onus of building an independent, prosperous and human rights respecting Africa is upon the African politician and not upon foreigners. The failure of African political elites in this regard opens up Africans communities to invasions by all sorts of interest groups, ranging from terrorists with religious motivations to imperialists whose only concern is to plunder Africa's resources and exploit her people. To the extent that politics in Africa is encased in a structure that attempts to make powerless second class or third class citizens of minorities or weaker segments of the population, to that extent will African politicians expose Africa to interference, invasion and exploitation. To turn around and blame people who push their agenda in Africa as a result of the failure of African elites generally to construct an ennobling



framework for social cohesion is to misunderstand how the problem can be solved.

Africans must learn to appreciate the implications of ideals that extend dignity to people wherever these ideals are generated; they must combine these with already existing noble ideals generated historically on the continent; then they must make this combination available to every citizen of Africa no matter his or her ethnic, religious or racial identity. This project must be the goal of political activity in Africa or else the continent may find that to forget history's lessons is to repeat its mistakes.

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