

Empire Building Leads to War

In 1914, World War I started in Europe. It began between the countries of Austria-Hungary and Serbia, but soon grew into a global war of 32 nations. On one side of the war were the Allies—Great Britain, France, Russia, Serbia, and Belgium. On the other side were the Central Powers—Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire. The United States came in on the side of the Allies in 1917.

There were several major causes of World War I:

- **European alliances:** European countries had joined alliances to better protect themselves. If one member was attacked, the others were obligated to help that country.
- **Nationalism:** Citizens felt fierce pride in their countries. Many groups wanted to be free from the control of other nations.
- **Imperialism:** Rivalries developed as countries tried to grab colonies. Conflicts had occurred over control of colonies in Africa and Asia. European countries resented and distrusted each other.
- **Militarism:** Countries had built strong armies and navies to defend their own countries and their colonies. Tensions built as countries watched each other build up military power.

The actual event that sparked WWI was the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand in 1914. He was the heir to the Austrian-Hungarian throne. Ferdinand was killed by a Bosnian Serb who wanted to free Bosnia from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and unite it with Serbia. **European empire building in Africa and Asia** helped lead to World War I because countries had built up resentments toward each other, had developed strong militaries to protect their colonies, and felt fierce pride in their countries and its possessions.



Word Definition

alliance: a union of countries to achieve a particular goal



Essential Skills

Answer the questions below.

1. If Europe had not divided itself into alliances, do you think World War I would have spread to as many countries as it did? _____ Explain your answer: _____

2. Next to each cause of WWI below, write how empire building affected it.

a. Nationalism: _____

b. Imperialism: _____

c. Militarism: _____

The New Imperialism

Imperialism is the policy of obtaining and occupying colonies to form an empire. In the late 1800s, a period of **New Imperialism** emerged as almost every European country tried to secure colonies in Africa, Asia, and the Western Pacific region.

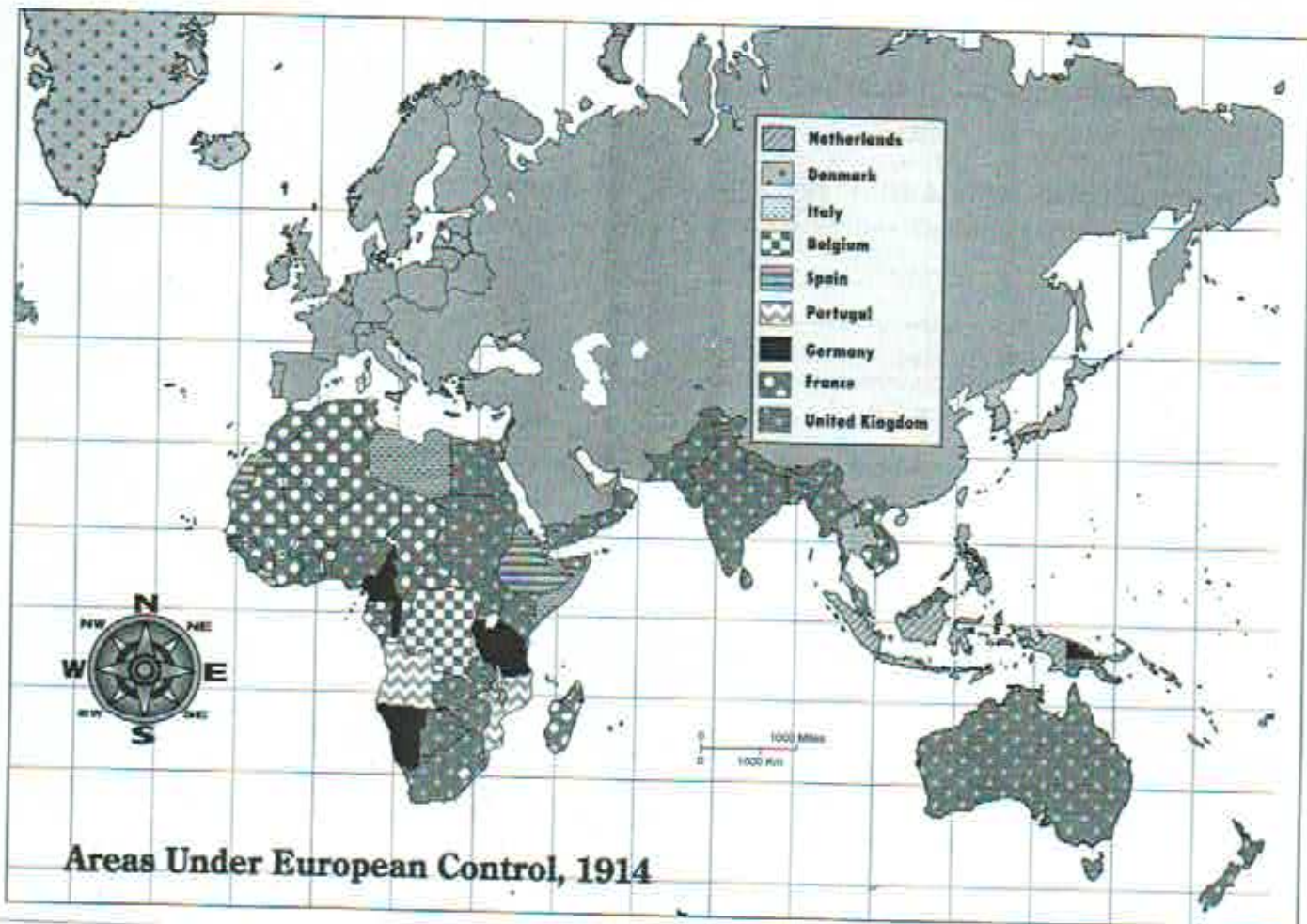
In 1884, European nations divided Africa into colonies at the Berlin West Africa Conference. This division became known as the "Scramble for Africa." The European countries desired to use these colonies for natural resources and new markets for their goods as well as for strategic advantage in case of war or another type of conflict.



Map Skills

Study the map of European Colonies in Africa and Asia in 1914. Follow these directions:

1. Circle the British colonies in red.
2. Circle the French colonies in green.
3. Circle the Portuguese colonies in blue.
4. Circle the Spanish colonies in orange.
5. Which country controlled the most territory?



Areas Under European Control, 1914



America by accident (Spice Trade)

Spices were an important component of ancient commerce well before the 15th-century, but were monopolized for centuries by Middle Eastern and North African middlemen who guarded the Asian provenance of their valuable sources closely and became fabulously wealthy for it. Back then, the colorful grains were used for flavoring food, but also for such tasks as making perfume, embalming the dead, preserving meat and sprucing up salve recipes in traditional medicine.

Europe dangled at the far end of the trading chain for spices, without access to eastern sources or the power to contest exorbitant prices. At one point in the 1300s, when tariffs were at their highest, a pound of nutmeg in Europe cost seven fattened oxen and was a more valuable commodity than gold.

Even the aristocracy — one of the biggest consumers of imported spices — began finding it hard to afford their shipments of peppercorn and clove. So, by the 1400s, when navigational equipment had improved to the point that long-haul sailing became possible, the kings and queens of Europe set out to change the balance of world trade by funding spice-hunting missions of their own.

First out of the blocks came Christopher Columbus who, in searching for a quicker route to India, bumped into the Americas instead.

Disappointed he hadn't reached India, Columbus' name for the native people he encountered in America and their local version of a spicy condiment — "Indians" and "peppers" — stuck nonetheless. Also looking for spices, Vasco de Gama was the first to 'round Africa, and a crew led by Ferdinand Magellan fully circumnavigated the globe.

1. List three uses that 15th century explorers wanted spices for:

2. Why did nutmeg cost so much in the 1300's?

3. What made it possible for kings and queens to fund spice-hunting missions?

4. Who landed in America while looking for a quicker route to India?

5. Name the other 2 explorers who were famous for searching the world for goods and spices.
