Why European Countries Built Empires in Africa and Asia

KS3 HISTORY Ages 11-14 ⏰ 3 min read

What Does Empire Mean?

An **empire** is when one country takes control of other lands and peoples far away. During the **1800s**, European countries like **Britain**, **France**, **Germany**, and **Belgium** wanted to build huge empires across **Africa** and **Asia**. But why? There were several important reasons.

Wanting More Wealth and Resources

The biggest reason was **money**. European countries discovered that Africa and Asia had valuable things they needed: **gold**, **diamonds**, **rubber**, **cotton**, and **spices**. These materials were rare in Europe and very expensive. By controlling these lands, European countries could take these resources for free and sell them for huge profits.

Think of it like finding a shop full of your favourite sweets that costs nothing to take — you'd want to own that shop, wouldn't you?

Power and Respect Between Countries

European countries also competed with each other. If **Britain** owned land in Africa, **France** wanted some too. Having a large empire meant your country was powerful and important. Leaders believed that the country with the biggest empire would be the strongest in the world. It was like a competition to see who could control the most land.

Think of it like kids competing to see who can collect the most trading cards — having more made you seem cooler and more powerful.

New Markets for Selling Goods

The **Industrial Revolution** had made European factories produce huge amounts of goods. Countries needed new customers to buy all these products. Africa and Asia had millions of people, so European countries saw them as perfect places to sell clothes,

tools, and other manufactured items. This meant more money for European businesses and workers.

Other Reasons

Some Europeans believed they were helping local people by teaching them their religion and ways of life. This belief, called the **civilising mission**, was used to justify taking over countries. However, this ignored the fact that African and Asian peoples already had their own rich cultures, religions, and ways of life.

What Really Happened

This **empire-building**, called **imperialism**, caused terrible harm. Local people lost their land, their freedom, and their resources. Many were forced to work without pay. Diseases brought by Europeans killed millions. Though these empires eventually ended, their effects are still felt today in those countries.

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