

AIM: Why is the Belgian Congo such an important Case Study of New Imperialism in Africa?

1. Exploration of the early – mid 1800's

- Represents renewed interest in Africa after abolition of the slave trade and the institution of slavery itself
- Era of adventure and scientific investigation in Europe – ex: finding the origins/headwaters of the great African rivers
- Technological – transportation – communication – medical advancements made exploration of the interior of Africa possible
- Henry Stanley among others

4. Forced Labor

- Used to harvest both ivory and rubber (“red rubber” – cost = blood)
- Brutal treatment – 10 million dead between 1880 and 1920
- Slavery
- Families = hostages taken as incentive to work
- Amputations! = “symbol” of Congo
- Force Publique – bonuses paid to soldiers based on number of natives that could be impressed into service

2. First Claim of the Era of “New Imperialism”

- Claim by King Leopold II of Belgium in 1878 sets in motion the Berlin Conference and the following Scramble for Africa
- Remember – no real interest in African colonization by European nations at this point



5. African Problems Post Independence

- Independence in 1962
- Artificial boundaries create new nations of Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire (later Democratic Republic of Congo) from colonial lands
- Extreme “Direct Rule”
 - only brutal rule and exploitation – no responsibility or experience for the native peoples
 - leads to political instability, dictatorship, struggles for power and resources, civil war, and ethnic (tribal) conflict

Rwanda – case of ethnic rivalry rooted in colonial rule that turns to ethnic cleansing/genocide

- Hutu vs. Tutsi
- 1990's (1994)

D.R. of Congo

- brutal civil war
- late 1990's – present
- spill over from Rwandan conflict
- ethnic conflict
- military rule – corruption
- valuable resources and minerals at stake!!
- involvement of outside nations – surrounding African countries makes it more complicated

3. Represents the Motives for “New Imperialism”

- **Humanitarianism** – (altruism?) – continue the abolitionist sentiment and rid central Africa of the last vestiges of the slave trade
- **Social Darwinism**
 - remember Leopold quote – remember his belief that “... to penetrate the darkness ... was a crusade worthy of ... century of progress” OR the brutality of Belgian rule that was encouraged because the Africans were “... animals inferior and devoid of emotion.”
- **Economic** – establishment of the Congo Free State (a “free trade zone”)
 - desire for resources driven by the Industrial Revolution
 - Ivory = effect of the increased prosperity and wealth of the middle class) – used as pool balls, piano keys, chess pieces, decorative knife handles
 - Rubber
 - Copper, tin, aluminum – in great demand due to the advancements of the Second Industrial Revolution