



In 1899 Britain completed its takeover of what is today South Africa. This had begun with the annexation of the Cape in 1795 and continued with the conquest of the Boer Republics in the late 19th century, following the Second Boer War. Cecil Rhodes was the pioneer of British expansion north into Africa with his privately owned British South Africa Company. Rhodes expanded into the land north of South Africa and established Rhodesia. Rhodes' dream of a railway connecting Cape Town to Alexandria passing through a British Africa covering the continent is what led to his company's pressure on the government for further expansion into Africa.

British gains in southern and East Africa prompted Rhodes and Alfred Milner, Britain's High Commissioner in South Africa, to urge a "Cape-to-Cairo" empire linking by rail the strategically important Canal to the mineral-rich South, though German occupation of Tanganyika prevented its realisation until the end of World War I. In 1903, the All Red Line telegraph system communicated with the major parts of the Empire.

