

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The Reach of Imperialism, 1800–1914

Lesson 1 Colonial Rule in Southeast Asia

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What are the causes and effects of imperialism? How do some groups resist control by others?

Reading HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

exploit to make use of meanly or unfairly for one’s own advantage

export to send a product or service for sale to another country

Content Vocabulary

imperialism the extension of a nation’s power over other lands

racism the belief that race determines a person’s traits and capabilities

protectorate a political unit that depends on another government for its protection

indirect rule a colonial government in which local rulers are allowed to maintain their positions of authority and status

direct rule colonial government in which local elites are removed from power and replaced by a new set of officials brought from the colonizing country

TAKING NOTES: *Identifying*

ACTIVITY Use a graphic organizer like this one to identify the political status of various regions of Southeast Asia.

Region	Political Status
Burma	
Singapore	
Vietnam	
Thailand	
Philippines	

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IT MATTERS BECAUSE

During the nineteenth century, many Western nations rushed to control territories in Southeast Asia and Africa. Great Britain, France, and the United States took over most of Southeast Asia. They controlled the governments and economies of the new colonies in different ways. Some places fought against Western rule, but most early resistance movements failed.

The New Imperialism

Guiding Question *What were the motivations for the new imperialism?*

The West began a new period of expansion in the nineteenth century. European nations began to see Asia and Africa as a source of raw materials for their industries. The societies of these continents became a market for Western manufactured goods.

In the 1880s, European states competed for overseas territory. **Imperialism**, the act of one nation's taking control of another nation, was not new. Europeans had colonies and trading posts in North America, South America, and Africa by the sixteenth century.

However, the imperialism of the late nineteenth century was different. It is called the "new imperialism" by some historians. Before this time, European states had been content to set up a few trading posts, especially in Africa and Asia. They could carry on trade and perhaps some missionary activity. Now they wanted control over these vast territories.

Why did Westerners begin to seek more new colonies after 1880? There was a strong economic motive. Capitalist states in the West wanted raw materials for their industries. These included rubber, oil, and tin. They also wanted new markets for the goods made by these industries. However, these economic motivations were not the only cause. European nation-states were involved in strong rivalries. They acquired colonies abroad in order to gain an advantage over their rivals. Colonies were also a source of national prestige, or status. In fact, some people believed a nation could not be great without colonies.

In addition, imperialism was tied to Social Darwinism and racism. Social Darwinists believed that in the struggle between nations, the fit, or the strong, would be successful. **Racism** is the belief that race determines a person's abilities and characteristics. Racists wrongly believe that some races are superior, or better. They also believed that some races are inferior, or lower in status.

Racist beliefs led to the use of military force against other nations. Some Europeans took a more religious and humanitarian approach to imperialism. They believed Europeans had a moral (based on the principles of right and wrong) responsibility to civilize, or improve the lives of, primitive people. They called this responsibility the "white man's burden." To some, this meant introducing Christianity to native peoples, whom they considered to be heathens. To others, it meant bringing the benefits of Western democracy and capitalism to these societies.

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Reading Progress Check

Explaining How did Europeans justify imperialism?

Colonial Takeover

Guiding Question *What led to Western dominance in Southeast Asia?*

The new imperialism of the late nineteenth century came to Southeast Asia. In 1800 the Europeans ruled only two societies in this area: the Spanish Philippines and the Dutch East Indies. By 1900, virtually the entire area was under Western rule.

Great Britain

The colonial expansion began with Great Britain. In 1819, Great Britain sent Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles to establish a new colony on a small island at the tip of the Malay Peninsula. The city was called Singapore, which means “city of the lion.” In the new age of steamships, it soon became a major stopping point for traffic going to or coming from China.

The British continued to advance into Southeast Asia during the next few decades. Britain took over the kingdom of Burma (modern Myanmar) next. Britain wanted control of Burma to protect its possessions in India. The British also wanted a land route through Burma into southern China. The plan did not work because the land between Burma and China was too hard to cross. Despite this failure, British activities in Burma led to the collapse of the Burmese monarchy. Britain soon established control over the entire country.

France

At the same time, French missionaries were working in Vietnam. The Vietnamese nervously watched the British advance into Burma. The local Vietnamese authorities saw Christianity as a threat to Confucian beliefs. They persecuted the French missionaries. However, they did not stop the missionaries. The internal rivalries in Vietnam eventually split the country in two. The north and the south each had its own government.

France was especially alarmed by British attempts to monopolize, or have complete control over, trade. The French knew they needed to stop the British from moving into Vietnam. So, the French government decided to force the Vietnamese to accept French protection in 1857.

The French eventually forced the Vietnamese ruler to give up territories in the Mekong River delta. They occupied the city of Saigon. Over the next 30 years, they extended their control over the rest of the country. In 1883, the French seized the city of Hanoi. Later they made the Vietnamese empire a French **protectorate**—a political unit that depends on another government for its protection.

In the 1880s, France extended its control over neighboring Cambodia, Annam, Tonkin, and Laos. By 1887 France included all its new possessions in a new Union of French Indochina.

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Thailand—The Exception

After the French took over Indochina, Thailand (then called Siam) was the only remaining free state in Southeast Asia. But the rivalry between the British and the French threatened to place Thailand under colonial rule, too.

Two remarkable rulers were able to stop that from happening. One was King Mongkut (known to theatergoers as the king in *The King and I*). The other was his son, King Chulalongkorn. Both promoted Western learning. They also continued to be friendly with the major European powers. In 1896 Britain and France agreed to keep Thailand as an independent buffer state between their possessions in Southeast Asia.

The United States

The Spanish-American War led to one final conquest in Southeast Asia. In 1898, U.S. naval forces under Commodore George Dewey defeated the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay in the Philippines. The Philippines had been under Spanish control.

President William McKinley decided to make the Philippines an American colony. He believed he had a moral obligation to “civilize” other parts of the world. In addition, he wanted to stop the Japanese from taking control over the area. In fact, the islands gave the United States a convenient starting point for trade with China.

Many Filipinos, or natives of the Philippines, did not wish to be controlled by the United States. Emilio Aguinaldo (ah·gee·NAHL·doh) led a movement for independence in the Philippines. He began his revolt against the Spanish and went into exile in 1898. When the United States acquired the Philippines, Aguinaldo continued the revolt. He then named himself the president of the Republic of the Philippines. Guerrilla forces led by Aguinaldo fought bitterly against the U.S. troops to establish their independence.

The fight for Philippine independence resulted in three years of bloody warfare. In the end, the United States defeated the guerrilla forces. President McKinley had his stepping-stone to the rich markets of China.



Reading Progress Check

Identifying What prompted Britain to colonize Singapore and Burma?

Colonial Regimes

Guiding Question *How did colonial powers govern their colonies?*

Western nations governed their new colonial empires either indirectly or directly. Their chief goals were to **exploit**, or take advantage of and use, the natural resources of the lands and to sell their manufactured goods to people who lived in the colonies.

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Indirect and Direct Rule

Sometimes a colonial power could reach its goals by working with local political elites. For example, the Dutch East India Company used **indirect rule** in the Dutch East Indies. Under indirect rule, local rulers kept their authority and status, but in a new colonial setting. This made access to the region's natural resources easier for the colonizer. Indirect rule was much cheaper because fewer officials had to be trained. It also meant less change in the local way of life.

Indirect rule was not always possible, however. Some local elites resisted foreign rule. In these cases, the native peoples in government were replaced with Western officials. This system was called **direct rule**. Great Britain administered Burma directly through its British officials in India. In Indochina, France used both systems. It imposed direct rule in South Vietnam, but ruled indirectly through the emperor in North Vietnam.

To justify their conquests, Western nations claimed to bring the blessings of Western civilization to their subjects. These "blessings" included representative government. In reality, many Westerners feared the idea of giving political rights such as the vote to native people, and they especially feared giving political rights to educated native people.

Colonial Economies

Colonizers did not want their subjects to develop their own industries. They wanted the colonies to buy manufactured products from them. So colonial policy stressed **export**, selling, of raw materials. This policy often led to some form of plantation agriculture, or growing crops on large farms. In this system, peasants worked as wage laborers on the foreign-owned plantations. Plantation owners kept wages at very low levels to increase profits. Thousands of peasants died as a result of unhealthy conditions on plantations. Also, peasants had to pay very high taxes.

Colonial rule did bring some benefits to Southeast Asia, however. A modern economic system began there. Colonial governments built railroads, highways, and other structures that benefited native peoples as well as colonials. The export market helped create an entrepreneurial, or small business, class in rural areas. In the Dutch East Indies, for example, small growers of rubber, palm oil, coffee, tea, and spices share in a small part of the profits of the colonial system. However, most of the profits were taken back to the colonizing country.



Reading Progress Check

Describing What kind of economic system did colonial rulers establish?

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Resistance to Colonial Rule

Guiding Question *How did indigenous people in Southeast Asia respond to colonial rule?*

Many Southeast Asians resented colonization. At first, resistance started with the existing ruling class. In Burma, the monarch himself fought colonization. In Vietnam, on the other hand, the emperor agreed to French control of his country. However, his government officials established an organization called Can Vuong (“Save the King”). They fought against the French without the emperor’s help.

Peasants sometimes revolted against Western control. Colonizers drove many peasants off their land. They needed to make room for plantation agriculture. Peasants then showed their anger at the foreign rulers. For example, in Burma in 1930, the Buddhist monk Saya San led a peasant uprising against the British colonial regime.

Early resistance movements failed. They were overcome by Western powers. In the early 1900s, however, a new kind of resistance emerged. It was based on nationalism. Resistance leaders often came from a new class that colonial rule had created. They were westernized intellectuals in the cities. They were the first generation of Asians to accept the institutions and values of the West. Many were educated in the West and spoke Western languages. They also worked in jobs connected with the colonial regimes.

At first, many of the leaders of these movements did not focus clearly on the idea of nationhood. Instead, they simply tried to defend the economic interests or religious beliefs of the Southeast Asian peoples. In Burma, students at the University of Rangoon organized to protest the official persecution of the Buddhist religion. They protested British lack of respect for local religious traditions. They protested against British arrogance, and failure to observe local customs in Buddhist temples. Resistance movements such as these did not begin to demand national independence until the 1930s.



Reading Progress Check

Analyzing Why were resistance movements often led by Southeast Asian people who had been educated in the West?
