Documents

Considering the Evidence: Indian Responses to Empire

The European empires of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries elicited a variety of responses from their colonial subjects—acceptance and even gratitude, disappointment with unfulfilled promises, active resistance, and sharp criticism. The documents that follow present a range of Indian commentary on British rule from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries.

During that roughly 150 years, India was Britain's "jewel in the crown," the centerpiece of its expanding empire in Asia and Africa (see Map 20.1, p. 926). Until the late 1850s, Britain's growing involvement with South Asia was organized and led by the British East India Company, a private trading firm that had acquired a charter from the Crown allowing it to exercise military, political, and administrative functions in India as well as its own commercial operations (see pp. 679–80). As the Mughal Empire decayed, the company assumed a governing role for increasingly large parts of the subcontinent. But after the explosive upheaval of the Indian Rebellion of 1857–1858, the British government itself assumed control of the region. Throughout the colonial era, the British relied heavily on an alliance with traditional elite groups in Indian society—landowners; the "princes" who governed large parts of the region; and the Brahmins, the highest-ranking segment of India's caste-based society.

Document 20.1

The Wonders of British Calcutta

Originally a small village in Bengal, Calcutta grew into a major trading settlement under the British East India Company, becoming the capital of British India in 1772. In the late eighteenth century, a widely traveled Indian Muslim scholar named Nawab Muhabbat Khan described in poetry his impressions of this British city.

- What features of Calcutta most surprised Muhabbat Khan?
- What were his attitudes toward the British themselves?

- What might you infer about his posture toward an emerging British political presence in India?

Nawab Muhabbat Khan

On Calcutta

Late Eighteenth Century

Calcutta is a wonderful city, in the country of Bang.°
It is a specimen of both China and Farang.°
Its buildings are heart-attracting and delightful....
From the beauty of the works of the European artists
The senses of the spectator are overpowered.
The hat-wearing Englishmen who dwell in them
All speak the truth and have good dispositions....
As a multitude of persons like the planets roam in every direction,
The streets take the resemblance of the Milky Way.
You will see, if you go to the bazaar, all the excellent things of the world.
All things which are produced in any part of the inhabited world
Are found in its bazaar without difficulty.
If I attempt to write in praise of the marvels of the city,
The pen will refuse its office.
But it is well known to all of every degree
That it combines the beauties of China and Farang.
The ground is as level as the face of the sky,
And the roads in it are as straight as the line of the equator.
People go out to walk on them,
And there they meet together like the planets.
Such a city as this in the country of the Bengalis
Nobody has seen or heard of in the world.

°**Bang:** Bengal.

°**Farang:** the West.

Source: Sir H. M. Elliot, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians* (London: Trubner and Co., 1877), 8:382–83.

Document 20.2

Seeking Western Education

Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833), born and highly educated within a Brahmin Hindu family, subsequently studied both Arabic and Persian, learned English, came into contact with British Christian missionaries, and found employment with the British East India Company. He emerged in the early nineteenth century as a leading advocate for religious and social reform within India, with a particular interest in ending *sati*, the practice in which widows burned themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres. In 1823, he learned about a British plan to establish a school in Calcutta that was to focus on Sanskrit texts and traditional Hindu learning. Document 20.2 records his response to that school, and to British colonial rule, in a letter to the British governor-general of India.

- Why was Roy opposed to the creation of this school?
- What does this letter reveal about Roy's attitude toward Indian and European cultures?
- What future did Roy imagine for India?
- How would you describe Roy's attitude toward British colonial rule in India?

Ram Mohan Roy

Letter to Lord Amherst

1823

The establishment of a new Sanskrit School in Calcutta evinces the laudable desire of Government to improve the natives of India by education, a blessing for which they must ever be grateful.... When this seminary of learning was proposed... we were filled with sanguine hopes that [it would employ] European gentlemen of talent and education to instruct the natives of India in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, and other useful sciences, which the natives of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world.... Our hearts were filled with mingled feelings of delight and gratitude; we already offered up thanks to Providence for inspiring the most generous and enlightened nations of the West with the glorious ambition of planting in Asia the arts and sciences of Modern Europe.

We find [however] that the Government are establishing a Sanskrit school under Hindu Pandits° to impart such knowledge as is already current in India. This seminary can only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practical use to the possessors or to society. The pupils will there acquire what was known two thousand years ago with the addition of vain and empty subtleties since then produced by speculative men, such as is already commonly taught in all parts of India....

Neither can much improvement arise from such speculations as the following which are the themes suggested by the Vedanta:° in what manner is the soul absorbed in the Deity? What relation does it bear to the Divine Essence? Nor will youths be fitted to be better members of society by the Vedantic doctrines which teach them to believe, that all visible things have no real existence, that as father, brother, etc., have no actual entity, they consequently deserve no real affection, and therefore the sooner we escape from them and leave the world the better....

[T]he Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe and providing a College furnished with necessary books, instruments, and other apparatus. In presenting this subject to your Lordship, I conceive myself discharging a solemn duty which I owe to my countrymen, and also to that

°**Pandits:** learned teachers.

Source: Rammohun Roy, *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy* (Allahabad, India: Panini Office, 1906), 471–74.

°**Vedanta:** a branch of Hindu philosophy.

enlightened sovereign and legislature which have extended their benevolent care to this distant land, actuated by a desire to improve the inhabitants, and therefore humbly trust you will excuse the liberty I have taken in thus expressing my sentiments to your Lordship.

Document 20.3

The Indian Rebellion

In 1857–1858, British-ruled India erupted in violent rebellion (see pp. 929–30). Some among the rebels imagined that the Mughal Empire might be restored to its former power and glory. Such was the hope that animated the Azamgarh Proclamation, issued in the summer of 1857, allegedly by the grandson of the last and largely powerless Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah, who controlled little more than the Red Fort in which he lived in Delhi.

- What grievances against British rule does this document disclose?
- How does the proclamation imagine the future of India, should the rebellion succeed? How does this compare to Roy's vision of India's future in Document 20.2?
- To what groups or classes of people was the proclamation directed? What classes were left out in the call to rebellion? Why might they have been omitted?
- Does the proclamation represent the strength and authority of the Mughal Empire or its weakness and irrelevance?

BAHADUR SHAH

The Azamgarh Proclamation

1857

It is well known to all that in this age the people of Hindustan,° both Hindus and Muslims, are being ruined under the tyranny and oppression of the infidel and the treacherous English. It is therefore the bounden duty of all the wealthy people of India, especially of those who have any sort of connection with any of the Muslim royal families and are considered the pastors and masters of their people, to stake their lives and property for the well-being of the public.... I, who am the grandson of Bahadur Shah, have... come here to extirpate the infidels residing in the eastern part of the country, and to liberate and protect the poor helpless people now groaning under their iron rule....

Several of the Hindu and Muslim chiefs who... have been trying their best to root out the English in India, have presented themselves to me and taken part in the reigning Indian crusade.... [B]e it known to all, that the ancient works both of the Hindus and the Muslims, the writings of the miracle-workers, and the calculations of the astrologers, pundits and

°**Hindustan:** northern India.

Source: "The Azamgarh Proclamation," *Delhi Gazette*, September 29, 1857.

rammals,° all agree, asserting that the English will no longer have any footing in India or elsewhere. Therefore it is incumbent on all to give up the hope of the continuation of the British sway, [and to] side with me....

Section I: Regarding Zamindars°

It is evident the British government, in making [land] settlements, have imposed exorbitant jummas,° and have disgraced and ruined several zamindars, by putting up their estates to public auction for arrears of rent, insomuch, that on the institution of a suit by a common ryot° yet, a maidservant, or a slave, the respectable zamindars are summoned into court arrested, put in gaol, and disgraced.... Besides this, the coffers of the zamindars are annually taxed with subscriptions for schools, hospitals, roads, etc. Such extortions will have no manner of existence in the Badshahi government;° but, on the contrary, the jummas will be light, the dignity and honour of the zamindars safe, and every zamindar will have absolute rule in his own zamindary. [A]nd should any zamindar who has been unjustly deprived of his lands during the English government personally join the war, he will be restored to his [property] and excused from paying one-fourth of the revenue.

Section II: Regarding Merchants

It is plain that the infidel and treacherous British government have monopolized the trade of all the fine and valuable merchandise such as indigo, cloth, and other articles of shipping, leaving only the trade of trifles to the people, and even in this they are not without their share of the profits, which they secure by means of customs and stamp fees, etc., in money suits, so that the people have merely a trade in name. Besides this, the profits of the traders are taxed with postages, tolls, and subscriptions for schools. Notwithstanding all these concessions, the merchants are liable to imprisonment and disgrace at the instance or complaint of a worthless man. When the Badshahi government is established, all these aforesaid fraudulent practices shall be dispensed with, and the trade of every article, without exception both by land and water, shall be open to the native merchants of India, who will have the benefit of the government steam-vessels and steam carriages for the conveyance of their merchandise gratis.... It is therefore the duty of every merchant to take part in the war, and aid the Badshahi government with his men and money....

Section III: Regarding Public Servants

It is not a secret thing, that under the British government, natives employed in the civil and military services have little respect, low pay, and no manner of influence; and all the posts of dignity and emolument in both the departments are exclusively bestowed upon Englishmen.... But under the Badshahi government, [these] posts...will be given to the natives.... Natives, whether Hindus or Muslims, who fall fighting against the English, are sure to go to heaven; and those killed fighting for the English, will, doubtless, go to hell; therefore, all the natives in the British service ought to be alive to their religion and interest, and, abjuring their loyalty to the English, side with the Badshahi government and obtain salaries of 200 or 300 rupees per month for the present, and be entitled to high posts in future.

Section IV: Regarding Artisans

It is evident that the Europeans, by the introduction of English articles into India, have thrown the weavers, the cotton-dressers, the carpenters, the blacksmiths, and the shoemakers, etc., out of employ, and have engrossed their occupations, so that every description of native artisan has been reduced to beggary. But under the Badshahi government the native artisan will exclusively be employed in the services of the kings, the rajahas, and the rich; and this will no doubt insure their prosperity.

°**rammals:** fortune tellers.

°**Zamindars:** large landowners.

°**jummas:** taxes.

°**ryot:** peasant farmer.

°**Badshahi government:** restored imperial government.

Section V: Regarding Pundits,° Fakirs,° and Other Learned Persons

The pundits and fakirs being the guardians of the Hindu and Muslim religions, respectively, and the European being the enemies of both the religions, and as at present a war is raging against the English on account of religion, the pundits and fakirs are bound to present themselves to me and take their share in the holy war, otherwise they will stand condemned... but if they come, they will, when the Badshahi government is well established, receive rent-free lands.

Lastly, be it known to all, that whoever out of the above-named classes, shall... still cling to the British government, all his estates shall be confiscated, and his property plundered, and he himself, with his whole family, shall be imprisoned, and ultimately put to death.

°**Pundits:** scholars.

°**Fakirs:** religious mystics.

Document 20.4

The Credits and Debits of British Rule in India

Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917) was a well-educated Indian intellectual, a cotton trader in London, and a founding member of the Indian National Congress, an elite organization established in 1885 to press for a wider range of opportunities for educated Indians within the colonial system. He was also the first Indian to serve in the British parliament. In 1871, while addressing an English audience in London, he was asked about the impact of British rule in India. Representing a "moderate" view within Indian political circles at the time, he organized his response in terms of "credits" and "debits."

- According to Naoroji, what are the chief advantages and drawbacks of British rule?
- What is Naoroji seeking from Britain?
- How does Naoriji's posture toward British rule compare to that of Ram Mohan Roy in Document 20.2 or the Azamgarh Proclamation in Document 20.3?

Dadabhai Naoroji

Speech to a London Audience

1871

Credit

In the Cause of Humanity: Abolition of *suttee*° and infanticide. Destruction of *Dacoits*, *Thugs*, *Pindarees*° and other such pests of Indian society. Allowing remarriage of Hindu widows, and charitable aid in time of famine. Glorious work all this, of which any nation may well be proud....

In the Cause of Civilization: Education, both male and female. Though yet only partial, an inestimable blessing as far as it has gone, and leading gradually to the destruction of superstition, and many moral and social evils. Resuscitation of India's own noble literature, modified and refined by the enlightenment of the West.

Politically: Peace and order. Freedom of speech and liberty of the press. Higher political knowledge and aspirations. Improvement of government in the native states. Security of life and property. Freedom from oppression caused by the caprice or greed of despotic rulers, and from devastation by war. Equal justice between man and man (sometimes vitiated by partiality to Europeans). Services of highly educated administrators, who have achieved the above-mentioned results.

Materially: Loans for railways and irrigation. Development of a few valuable products, such as indigo, tea, coffee, silk, etc. Increase of exports. Telegraphs.

Generally: A slowly growing desire of late to treat India equitably, and as a country held in trust. Good intentions. No nation on the face of the earth has ever had the opportunity of achieving such a glorious work as this.... I appreciate, and so do my countrymen, what England has done for India, and I know that it is only in British hands that her regeneration can be accomplished. Now for the debit side.

Debit

In the Cause of Humanity: Nothing. Everything, therefore, is in your favor under this heading.

In the Cause of Civilization: As I have said already, there has been a failure to do as much as might have been done, but I put nothing to the debit. Much has been done, though.

Politically: Repeated breach of pledges to give the natives a fair and reasonable share in the higher administration of their own country, which has much shaken confidence in the good faith of the British word. Political aspirations and the legitimate claim to have a reasonable voice in the legislation and the imposition and disbursement of taxes, met to a very slight degree, thus treating the natives of India not as British subjects, in whom representation is a birthright. Consequent on the above, an utter disregard of the feelings and views of the natives....

Financially: All attention is engrossed in devising new modes of taxation, without any adequate effort to increase the means of the people to pay; and the consequent vexation and oppressiveness of the taxes imposed, imperial and local. Inequitable financial relations between England and India, i.e., the political debt of £100,000,000 clapped on India's shoulders, and all home charges also, though the British Exchequer contributes nearly £3,000,000 to the expense of the colonies.

Materially: The political drain, up to this time, from India to England, of above £500,000,000, at the lowest computation, in principal alone, which with interest would be some thousands of millions. The further continuation of this drain at the rate, at present, of above £12,000,000 per annum, with a tendency to increase. The consequent continuous impoverishment and exhaustion of the country, ex-

°***suttee*:** variant spelling of *sati*, the practice of widows burning themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres.

°**Dacoits, Thugs, Pindarees:** thieves, murderers, bands of robbers.

Source: Dadabhai Naoroji, *Essays, Speeches, Addresses and Writings* (Bombay: Caxton Printing Works, 1887), 131–36.

cept so far as it has been very partially relieved and replenished by the railway and irrigation loans, and the windfall of the consequences of the American war, since 1850. Even with this relief, the material condition of India is such that the great mass of the poor have hardly tuppence a day and a few rags, or a scanty subsistence. The famines that were in their power to prevent, if they had done their duty, as a good and intelligent government. The policy adopted during the last fifteen years of building railways, irrigation works, etc., is hopeful, has already resulted in much good to your credit, and if persevered in, gratitude and contentment will follow. An increase of exports without adequate compensation; loss of manufacturing industry and skill. Here I end the debit side.

Summary:

To sum up the whole, the British rule has been: morally, a great blessing; politically, peace and order on one hand, blunders on the other; materially, impoverishment, relieved as far as the railway and other loans go. The natives call the British system "Sakar ki Churi," the knife of sugar. That is to say, there is no oppression, it is all smooth and sweet, but it is the knife, notwithstanding. I mention this that you should know these feelings. Our great misfortune is that you do not know our wants. When you will know our real wishes, I have not the least doubt that you would do justice. The genius and spirit of the British people is fair play and justice.

Document 20.5

Gandhi on Modern Civilization

Mahatma Gandhi, clearly modern India's most beloved leader, is best known for his theories of *satyagraha*. This was an aggressive but nonviolent approach to political action that directly challenged and disobeyed unjust laws, while seeking to change the hearts of their British oppressors (see pp. 1086–90 in Chapter 23). But Gandhi's thinking was distinctive in another way as well, for he objected not only to the foreign and exploitative character of British rule but also more fundamentally to the modern civilization that it carried. In 1908, he spelled out that critique in a pamphlet titled "*Hind Swaraj*" ("Indian Home Rule"). There Gandhi assumes the role of an "editor," responding to questions from a "reader."

- What is Gandhi's most fundamental criticism of British rule in India?
- What is the difference between his concept of "civilization" and that which he ascribes to the British?
- How does Gandhi reconcile the idea of India as a single nation with the obvious religious division between Hindus and Muslims?
- What kind of future does Gandhi seek for his country?
- What criticisms do you imagine that Gandhi met as he sought to introduce his ideas into India's increasingly nationalist political life?

MAHATMA GANDHI

Indian Home Rule

1908

READER: Now you will have to explain what you mean by civilization.

EDITOR: Let us first consider what state of things is described by the word "civilization."...The people of Europe today live in better-built houses than they did a hundred years ago. This is considered an emblem of civilization.... If people of a certain country, who have hitherto not been in the habit of wearing much clothing, boots, etc., adopt European clothing, they are supposed to have become civilized out of savagery. Formerly, in Europe, people ploughed their lands mainly by manual labor. Now, one man can plough a vast tract by means of steam engines and can thus amass great wealth. This is called a sign of civilization. Formerly, only a few men wrote valuable books. Now, anybody writes and prints anything he likes and poisons people's minds. Formerly, men traveled in wagons. Now, they fly through the air in trains at the rate of four hundred and more miles per day. This is considered the height of civilization. It has been stated that, as men progress, they shall be able to travel in airship and reach any part of the world in a few hours.... Everything will be done by machinery. Formerly, when people wanted to fight with one another, they measured between them their bodily strength; now it is possible to take away thousands of lives by one man working behind a gun from a hill. This is civilization.... Formerly, men were made slaves under physical compulsion. Now they are enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy....This civilization takes note neither of morality nor of religion. Its votaries calmly state that their business is not to teach religion. Some even consider it to be a superstitious growth....This civilization is irreligion, and it has taken such a hold on the people in Europe that those who are in it appear to be half mad. They lack real physical strength or courage. They keep up their energy by intoxication. They can hardly be happy in solitude. Women, who should be the queens of households, wander in the streets or they slave away in factories. For the sake of a pittance, half a million women in England alone are laboring under trying circumstances in factories or similar institutions.

This civilization is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed.... I cannot give you an adequate conception of it. It is eating into the vitals of the English nation. It must be shunned.... Civilization is not an incurable disease, but it should never be forgotten that the English are at present afflicted by it.

READER: I now understand why the English hold India. I should like to know your views about the condition of our country.

EDITOR: It is a sad condition.... It is my deliberate opinion that India is being ground down, not under the English heel, but under that of modern civilization. It is groaning under the monster's terrible weight. [M]y first complaint is that India is becoming irreligious....We are turning away from God.... [W]e should set a limit to our worldly ambition.... [O]ur religious ambition should be illimitable....

EDITOR: Railways, lawyers, and doctors have impoverished the country so much so that, if we do not wake up in time, we shall be ruined.

READER: I do now, indeed, fear that we are not likely to agree at all. You are attacking the very institutions which we have hitherto considered to be good.

EDITOR: It must be manifest to you that, but for the railways, the English could not have such a hold on India as they have. The railways, too, have spread the bubonic plague. Without them the masses could not move from place to place. They are the carriers of plague germs. Formerly we had natural segregation. Railways have also increased the frequency of famines because, owing to facility of means of locomotion, people sell out their grain and it is sent to

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Source: Mohandas Gandhi, *Indian Home Rule* (Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1922), Parts 6, 8, 9, 10, 13.

the dearest markets. People become careless and so the pressure of famine increases. Railways accentuate the evil nature of man. Bad men fulfill their evil designs with greater rapidity....

READER: You have denounced railways, lawyers, and doctors. I can see that you will discard all machinery. What, then, is civilization?

EDITOR: The answer to that question is not difficult. I believe that the civilization India has evolved is not to be beaten in the world.... India is still, somehow or other, sound at the foundation.... India remains immovable and that is her glory. It is a charge against India that her people are so uncivilized, ignorant, and stolid that it is not possible to induce them to adopt any changes. It is a charge really against our merit. What we have tested and found true on the anvil of experience, we dare not change. Many thrust their advice upon India, and she remains steady. This is her beauty: it is the sheet-anchor of our hope.

Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. So doing, we know ourselves.... If this definition be correct, then India... has nothing to learn from anybody else.... Our ancestors, therefore, set a limit to our indulgences. [They] dissuaded us from luxuries and pleasures. We have managed with the same kind of plough as existed thousands of years ago. We have retained the same kind of cottages that we had in former times and our indigenous education remains the same as before. We have had no system of life-corroding competition. Each followed his own occupation or trade and charged a regulation wage. It was not that we did not know how to invent machinery, but our forefathers knew that, if we set our hearts after such things, we would become slaves and lose our moral fiber.... They were, therefore, satisfied with small villages.... A nation with a constitution like this is fitter to teach others than to learn from others....

The tendency of the Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being; that of the Western civilization is to propagate immorality. The latter is godless; the former is based on a belief in God. So understanding and so believing, it behooves every lover of India to cling to the Indian civilization even as a child clings to the mother's breast.

Using the Evidence: Indian Responses to Empire

1. **Noticing differences and changes:** What different understandings of British colonial rule are reflected in these documents? In what ways did those understandings change over time? How might you account for those differences and changes?
2. **Describing alternative futures:** What can you infer about the kind of future for India that the authors of these documents anticipate?
3. **Noticing what's missing:** What Indian voices are not represented in these documents? How might such people have articulated a different understanding of the colonial experience?
4. **Responding to Gandhi:** How might each of the other authors have responded to Gandhi's analysis of British colonial role and his understanding of "civilization"? To what extent do you find Gandhi's views relevant to the conditions of the early twenty-first century?

Visual Sources

Considering the Evidence: The Scramble for Africa

The centerpiece of Europe's global expansion during the nineteenth century occurred in the so-called scramble for Africa, when a half dozen or so European countries divided up almost the entire continent into colonial territories (see Map 20.2, p. 927). The "scramble" took place very quickly (between roughly 1875 and 1900), surprising even the European leaders who initiated it, as well as the many African societies which suddenly found themselves confronting highly aggressive and well-armed foreign forces. Each of the rival powers—Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, and Italy—sought to get a piece of a continent that many believed held the promise of great wealth. Given Europe's wars over colonial possessions in the early modern era, it is remarkable that the entire partition of Africa took place without any direct military conflict between the competing countries. But in establishing their control on the ground, Europeans faced widespread African resistance, making the scramble an extremely bloody process of military conquest. The images that follow illustrate some of the distinctive features of the scramble for Africa as well as the differing ways in which it was perceived and represented.

As the Atlantic slave trade diminished over the course of the nineteenth century, Europeans began to look at Africa in new ways—as a source of raw materials, as an opportunity for investment, as a market for industrial products, as a field for exploration, and as an opportunity to spread Christianity. It was not until the last quarter of the nineteenth century that Europeans showed much interest in actually acquiring territory and ruling large populations in Africa. Visual Source 20.1, from a late-nineteenth-century French board game, illustrates the widespread interest in the growing missionary enterprise in Africa as well as in the celebrated adventures of the intrepid explorers who penetrated the dangerous interior of the continent. It enabled ordinary Europeans to participate in exciting events in distant lands. This game featured the travels of David Livingstone and Henry Stanley. Livingstone (1813–1873) was a British missionary and explorer of central Africa whose work in exposing the horrors of the Arab slave trade gave him an almost mythic status among Europeans. That East African commerce in human beings, operating largely in the Islamic world, was growing even as the transatlantic trade was shrinking. Stanley (1841–1904), a British journalist and explorer, gained lasting fame by finding Livingstone, long out of touch with his homeland, deep in the African interior.

Visual Source 20.1 Prelude to the Scramble (Private Collection/Archives Charmet/The Bridgeman Art Library)

- What images of Africa are suggested by this board game? Notice carefully the landscape, the animals, and the activities in which people are engaged.
- How does the game depict European activities in Africa?
- What might be the meaning of the large sun arising at the top of the image?
- What nineteenth-century realities are missing from this portrayal of Africa?

As the scramble for Africa got under way in earnest in the 1880s and 1890s, it became a highly competitive process. French designs on Africa, for example, focused on obtaining an uninterrupted East–West link from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. But the British, entrenched in Egypt and in

Visual Source 20.2 Conquest and Competition (© Musée de l'Armée/Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY)

control of the Suez Canal, were determined that no major European power should be allowed to control the headwaters of the Nile on which Egypt depended. Those conflicting goals came to a head in 1898, when British forces moving south from Egypt met a French expedition moving northeast from the Atlantic coast of what is now Gabon. That encounter took place along the Nile River at Fashoda in present-day Sudan, threatening war between France and Great Britain. In the end, negotiations persuaded the French to withdraw.

Visual Source 20.2, the cover of a French publication, shows the commander of the French expedition, Jean-Baptiste Marchand, who gained heroic stature in leading his troops on an epic journey across much of Africa for more than eighteen months.

- How did the artist portray Marchand? How might a British artist have portrayed him?
- What does this visual source suggest about the role of violence in the scramble for Africa?
- Notice the large number of African troops among Marchand's forces. What does that suggest about the process of colonial conquest? Why might Africans have agreed to fight on behalf of a European colonial power?
- How do you understand the fallen soldier lying between Marchand's legs?

Nowhere did the vaulting ambition of European colonial powers in Africa emerge more clearly than in the British vision of a North–South corridor of British territories along the eastern side of the continent stretching from South Africa to Egypt, or in the more popular phrase of the time, "from the Cape to Cairo." A part of this vision was an unbroken railroad line running the entire length of the African continent. That grand idea was popularized by Cecil Rhodes, a British-born businessman and politician who made a fortune in South African diamonds and became an enthusiastic advocate of British imperialism. Visual Source 20.3, an 1892 cartoon published in the British magazine *Punch*, shows Rhodes bestriding the continent with one foot in Egypt and the other in South Africa.

- Is this famous image criticizing or celebrating Rhodes's Cape-to-Cairo dream? Explain your reasoning.
- What does this visual source suggest about the purpose of the Cape-to-Cairo scheme and the means to achieve it? Notice the telegraph wire in Rhodes's hands and the rifle on his shoulder.
- How did the artist portray the African continent? What does the absence of African people suggest? How does this visual source compare to Visual Source 20.1?

Visual Source 20.3 From the Cape to Cairo (The Granger Collection, NY)

- Scholars have sometimes argued that the scramble for Africa was driven less by concrete economic interests than by emotional, even romantic, notions of national grandeur and personal adventure. In what ways do Visual Sources 20.2 and 20.3 support or challenge this interpretation?

While late-nineteenth-century public opinion in Europe widely and often enthusiastically supported the acquisition of African territories, there were critics of that process as well. In France, some saw imperialism as contradicting values deriving from the French Revolution (liberty, equality, fraternity), while others argued that adventures in Africa distracted their country from the more

serious threat of growing German power in Europe. Visual Source 20.4, published in 1900, represents a critical French commentary on British imperialism during the Boer War. In that conflict, which began in 1899, British colonial authorities in South Africa sought to crush communities of earlier Dutch settlers, known as Boers, who stood in the way of complete British control over South Africa's rich diamond and gold resources. The figure on the left represents Cecil Rhodes, the arch-imperialist business magnate and a prominent politician in South Africa, while the figure on the right portrays Joseph Chamberlain, the British colonial secretary who ardently supported the war as a means of

Visual Source 20.4 A French Critique of the Boer War (Mary Evans Picture Library/The Image Works)

ensuring complete British supremacy in South Africa. The figure on the floor is a Boer victim of British imperialism.

- How does this image depict Rhodes and Chamberlain? What motives are implied for British actions in South Africa?
- How does this portrayal of Cecil Rhodes differ from that in Visual Source 20.3?
- Given extensive French conquests in Africa, how might British observers have responded to this cartoon?
- Notice that the victim in this case is white, a Boer descendant of Dutch settlers, who had been in South Africa since 1652. What difference might this have made in the French willingness to criticize their British rivals?

One exception to the general European takeover of Africa during the scramble was the kingdom of Ethiopia. Located in the mountainous highlands of northeastern Africa, Ethiopia boasted an ancient pedigree, a long-established Christian culture, a literate elite, and rich agricultural resources. During the scramble for Africa, that country also had an astute monarch in Menelik II (reigned 1889–1913). Playing various European powers against one another, he acquired from them a considerable arsenal of modern weapons and gained substantial territory for his kingdom, in effect taking part in the scramble. In the famous Battle of Adowa in 1896, Menelik's forces decisively defeated the Italians, who were seeking to add Ethiopia to their country's African empire. By this victory, Ethiopia preserved its independence and became

Visual Source 20.5 The Ethiopian Exception (© Trustees of the British Museum)

a continental symbol of African bravery and resistance in the face of European imperialism.

In Visual Source 20.5, an unknown Ethiopian artist, working during the 1940s, celebrated the victory at Adowa at a time when Ethiopia had just fought off yet another Italian effort at conquest, this time led by Mussolini during World War II. The painting itself replicated in both style and content many earlier artistic celebrations of that earlier victory. In the upper left corner, Emperor Menelik is shown wearing a crown and seated under a royal umbrella. His queen, Empress Taytu, is visible in the lower left on horseback and holding a revolver. The commander of the Ethiopian forces sits on a brown horse, while leading his troops. At the top of the painting, St. George, the patron saint of Ethiopia, presides over the battle scene within a halo of red, yellow, and green, the colors of the Ethiopian flag adopted shortly after the battle.[26]

- How does this painting represent the Ethiopian triumph at Adowa?
- What features of the painting might help explain that improbable victory, at least to Ethiopian observers? How does the artist portray the resources available to each side?
- How did the Ethiopian painter depict the Italian enemy? Keep in mind that Ethiopian artists generally portrayed the forces of good in full face, while the wicked or evil were shown in profile.
- How do you imagine the news of the Battle of Adowa was received elsewhere in Africa and among peoples of African descent in the Americas? What might this painting have meant to Ethiopians in the wake of Mussolini's invasion of their country during the 1930s?

Using the Evidence: The Scramble for Africa

1. **Distinguishing viewpoints:** From what different perspectives do these visual sources represent the scramble for Africa? What criticisms of the scramble can you read in them?
2. **Portraying Africans and Europeans:** Both Africans and Europeans are portrayed variously in these visual sources. What differences can you identify?
3. **Using images . . . selectively:** In what ways might visual sources such as these be most useful to historians seeking to understand the scramble for Africa? For what kinds of questions about the scramble might they have little to offer?
4. **Considering moral visions:** How do these visual sources deal with issues of morality or visions of right and wrong?