

Why did Britain participate in the Scramble for Africa

The scramble for Africa took place in . Britain involvement was triggered by many things. Relations in Europe at this time seemed to be waivering and, from the clear attitude of imperialism at the time, the solution seemed all too obvious. Africa, in these times seemed to be a mysterious country, untouched and undiscovered by civilisation. Therefore the powers in Europe, instead of wrestling over a small partition of land, went there to gain prestige and status. This and trading materials became a key reason for the scramble. Strategy, mainly from Britain's point of view was also deemed another major factor in getting involved.

In these times, Christianity seemed to be one of those ideological factors involved in the scramble. Although not a factor considered to start the whole scramble off, it is important to maintain that missionary activity was common around the scramble period. This came from a British desire to cultivate the less fortunate and, in a continent so heavily influenced by Islam, to teach them Christian values. Missionaries like David Livingstone helped to stop slavery and this was completed in 1833 when it was finally abolished in the British Empire.

Strategy was everything in the British empire at the time and the first priority was to protect the colonies. Due to the scramble taking place and the poor relations among the powers involved in the scramble, it was in Britain's interest to maintain all its most important colonies. India, the jewel in the British crown was once again top of priorities and so, in order to protect it, they needed quicker access to it. This came in the form of the Suez canal but there was one problem, it was in the mediterranean. If Britain could gain control of the African colonies around that area, they could have easy, untroubled access to the Suez.

Another factor linked with strategy was that Britain and its reputation ever so slightly waivering. Therefore they needed a way of defending Britain and its prestigious status. By thus taking many African countries, it was saying that Britain were back on top and had discovered new countries to capture.

Imperialism, being the attitude of the time corresponded well with this plan to better Britain's status by taking more countries as Britain was loooking to expand and Europe didn't really seem to be the place to do it. This imrialism took them through countless battles with both Europeans and Africans.

Tension in Europe also played a large part in Britain's involvement. Britain's suspicions about France and Germn seemd to be unfounded as both took over Morocco and Togoland and other countries to try to expand their own empire and, with relations far from pleasing, Britain needed to mark its claim in Africa. Germany seemed to be a key reason for getting involved following the annexation of Bechuanaland in 1884. France weren't forgotten and though only considered to be rumours of French in interest in Egypt, Britain made it into a stronghold and even then conquered the Sudan to strengthen it further. This must have played a part in proceedings as the European countries tried to continually outshine another in an attempt to show status. And as Britain, from the latter point needed to establish a defence of its supremacy, the action of colonisation must have seemed more than apt.

With battles with the French over Egypt and clashes with Germany over East Africa, it showed that Britain needed before to put these countries back in their place. This point must have proved a good motivational factor for Britain to have get involved as no way were they going to sit back and watch France and Germany expand their empire.

Trade has to be next on the agenda from Britain's point of view. Due to the Industrial revolution taking shape, it seemed to create a whole new market. As the demand in Britain for alternative products grew and grew, Britain had to do something. Organisations set-up businesses in accordance to the raw materials from different regions. Rubber was imported from Malaya and new luxuries, like cocoa. Firms like Cadburys and Rowntree took over huge swathes of Africa from this new demand and exchanged cheap goods for these sought after luxuries. After the 1870's, private enterprises were built as Britain set-up spheres of influence on the coasts so they could trade between countries. This also introduced tariffs which could also benefit the British economy. This exploitation had to be a major factor in getting involved as the abundance of these before quite rare items now found their way back into Britain and thus created a whole new market which in turn created whole new revenue. This backs up the point that Britain needed to gain more African countries than the other Europeans as there was more chance of them not attaining the same raw materials thus driving the price up for the products.

Slavery was the single most lucrative business in the ages. This factor alone may have been a great reason for Britain to get involved. 90% of trade was slavery. This expanded Britain's market again and the amount of money being ploughed into the economy. Slaves could be exported to the Caribbean for sugar or tobacco or could be sent back to Britain or could be exchanged for African raw materials.

Raw materials also possessed great reason for Britain to participate as never before had Britain even dreamed of the amount of rare goods available. This led to the discovery of gold in the and also caused huge battles to occur between the Afriians of the country. These inspired the British almost definitely to discover more about Africa.

The need to protect trade routes must also have been a major factor. The need to protect the route to India was one of the many aims throughout the Scramble for Africa. They also needed to maintain Egypt and to stop the Boers from colonising any more as they seemed to be the only worthy force to be reckoned with. Britain tried to create yet another stronghold on Africa by setting up trade organisations. This links to the earlier paragraph and shows that Britain didn't necessarily need military strength to overcome her rivals. Through sheer power in trade alone the British managed to deprive the Boers of commercial advantages that they would have had otherwise. The companies set-up, like Rhode's British South Africa Company secured the British interest.

Overall the main factor is Trade and the Economy as Britain seemed to invade countries that could give something back to Britain, in the form of raw materials and substances like gold. The British needed to set-up these trading organisations to fund it own welfare not to just show its supremacy. Although this was a major factor, I don't think it was an initialising factor. The protection of Trade routes was also important as

Britain needed to maintain quick access through to Asia and, with Britain's very high regard of India, this needed to be kept to. Suspicion of other countries is a major point but again not an initialising factor as once Britain had completed the objectives mentioned above, then they could start to focus on beating the Germans and the French in effect.