

# IMPERIALISM AND WORLD POLITICS

BY  
PARKER THOMAS MOON, PH.D.  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
IN COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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TO E. C. M.

## PREFACE

Of Greek and Roman imperialism there are admirable histories, but to what convenient volume can one turn for a similar general account of the greater imperialism of our own times? What Rome required three centuries to achieve has been dwarfed by modern nations in barely fifty years. The imperialism of these last five decades will rank, in the writer's opinion, as one of the major phases of modern history and one of the two or three foremost problems in world politics and world economics.

Seeing the trees but not the wood is so natural a tendency that world events such as the industrial revolution, the rise of democracy, and contemporary imperialism are not easily envisaged in their full magnitude until we have had time to put their many specific incidents together in some intelligible synthesis. In the case of imperialism, making such a synthesis is as difficult as it is important, because it means fitting together into one narrative such apparently unrelated persons as Gladstone and Gandhi, Roosevelt and Cecil Rhodes, Menelik and Mussolini, Kaiser Wilhelm II and King Thebaw; because it means combining in one story the Entente Cordiale and the Chinese Consortium, Dollar Diplomacy and pound sterling politics, alliances and loans, foreign missions and raw materials; because it means viewing as parts of one political panorama the Near East and the Far East, Mexico and Morocco, the Philippines and Fiji, Turkestan and Transvaal, Congo and Cuba. Difficult as it may be to accomplish the task at all satisfactorily, such a synthesis seems well worth attempting. That is the primary purpose of this book.

The second purpose is to present a more realistic view of world politics than is offered by conventionalized, chronological narratives of European diplomacy. Nothing is more striking in the mass of "secret treaties" and confidential official documents published since the war than the overwhelming evidence that the old diplomacy of Europe was feverishly and more or less

frankly devoted to gaining economic or strategic advantages and political prestige by appropriating the backward lands of Asia, Africa, the Balkans and the Pacific. Imperialism was the reality, diplomacy its superficial expression. If this is true, as it appears to be, then the story of international relations before 1914 cannot be interpreted simply as a matter of narrowly European vendettas and erratic personalities. More attention must be given to the mines and railway concessions, the colonial markets and naval bases, in which the diplomats themselves were so vitally interested. By emphasizing the fact that the Great Powers are not nations but nation-empires, and by devoting a series of chapters to the reasons for international rivalry in arenas of conflict such as North Africa, the Near East, the Middle East, the Far East, and the Pacific, the writer has endeavored to concentrate attention on the things for which diplomats have contended, rather than on the diplomats themselves.

An effort has been made, likewise, to study the economic and social forces behind diplomacy. To say that Germany threatened France with war about Morocco, or that France seized Tunis, is worse than meaningless. Probably a majority of Frenchmen would have refused to seize Tunis, had they been consulted. Certainly on the Moroccan question the Kaiser and his own ministers were at variance. Nations are rarely units in such matters. The habit of regarding them as units has unfortunately been strengthened of late by passionate controversies respecting the causes of the Great War. Attempting to indict one nation and vindicate another, to make "Germany" or "the Allies" guilty or innocent, has the unfortunate effect of obscuring the dynamic factors of which the German and other governments were—and are—instruments. Stressing these factors, the first few chapters of this book analyze the business interests, the social groups, the professional propaganda, the popular sentiments, the theories, and the economic conditions which seem to have dominated imperialist diplomacy. Throughout the book, it is to be hoped, the reader will see the exporter, the factory-owner, the concession-hunter, the missionary, the admiral, peering over the shoulder of the diplomat.

The narrative might be more conventional if it culminated in the Great War. Instead it continues into the present year.

Perhaps we are now far enough removed from 1914 to realize that it is historically and psychologically inaccurate to treat European diplomacy before that fatal year as if its sole trend had been toward Serajevo. (The ideas and interests productive of war in 1914 had caused many previous wars, and in large measure they have continued to exist since 1914.) The present volume, therefore, is written around ideas and interests, rather than around the War, and its concluding chapter is devoted, not to the indictment of any nation or any diplomatist, but to an evaluation of the past achievements and present problems of imperialism. For the problems the author candidly confesses that he can see no solutions except more enlightened public opinion and more effective international cooperation, but no panacea is offered, for the purpose of this book is analytical and historical rather than controversial.

For specialists there exists an appalling number of works on various regional and topical subdivisions of the subject. With these the present volume is not intended to compare or compete. It is designed for the general reader and for college classes as a survey of the causes and motives, the history and the effects of imperialist world politics during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It can make no claim to finality. Before the definitive history of imperialism can be composed, there are many monographs to be written by qualified specialists. To exhaust even the existing printed matter bearing on the subject would require a busy lifetime. The writer does not pretend to have utilized more than a modest portion of the innumerable books, pamphlets, articles, and archives available on almost every chapter. Nor has any consistent effort been made to cite all sources or to give extensive bibliographical references, since in a book covering so broad a field a morass of footnotes could easily swamp the reader without satisfying the scholar. Here and there, however, a few notes are given to indicate some of the more interesting documents published in the post-bellum flood of diplomatic revelations, and occasionally other important public papers and secondary works are mentioned. For readers who wish to venture farther afield, the footnotes may be supplemented by consulting the selected bibliographies in my *Syllabus on International Relations* and the quarterly lists of books and documents in *Foreign Affairs*.

For their generous courtesy in permitting the use of maps previously published in their own works, I am grateful to Professors Carlton J. H. Hayes (for the maps of Asia and Africa from his *Political and Social History of Modern Europe* and the map of the British Empire adapted from a map in his *Brief History of the Great War*), Arthur M. Schlesinger (for maps of the Far East and the Pacific from his *Political and Social History of the United States*), Edward M. Earle (for the map of Turkish Railways from his *Turkey, the Great Powers and the Bagdad Railway*), Leonard O. Packard and Charles P. Sinnott (for the map of the Lands of the Caribbean Sea from their *Nations as Neighbors*), and Mr. James A. Williamson (for the map of South Africa from his *Brief History of British Expansion*). These maps are reproduced with the gracious consent of Macmillan and Company, Ltd., the publishers of Mr. Williamson's book, and of The Macmillan Company, the publishers of the other books mentioned. Credit is due also to the skillful engravers who transformed eight rude manuscript sketches into intelligible maps.

Full acknowledgment of my debt to the scholars and statesmen whose works have been drawn upon, often without special mention, and to the librarians here and in Paris, Geneva and London, who aided and tolerated a troublesome reader, would be impossible in these few lines.

Nor can I, finally, find fit words to thank that tenth Muse whose constant encouragement made the completion of this task possible, and for whose sake I would this were a better book.

PARKER THOMAS MOON.

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## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPERIALISM—WORLD CONQUEST AND WORLD UNREST . . . . .	1
II. TWO CHANGES OF MIND . . . . .	8
Mercantilism, or the Creed of Princes . . . . .	9
<i>Laissez-faire</i> , or the Creed of Merchant Princes . . . . .	14
Anti-Imperialism in the Mid-Victorian Age . . . . .	19
III. WHY EUROPE SHOULDERED THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN . . . . .	25
The Logic of Economic Necessity . . . . .	25
The Logic of Nationalism . . . . .	32
England's "Absence of Mind" . . . . .	34
French Logic <i>ex post facto</i> . . . . .	41
Bismarck's Caution . . . . .	47
Others Share the Burden . . . . .	53
IV. DYNAMICS OF IMPERIALISM—MEN AND MOTIVES . . . . .	58
Business Interests . . . . .	58
Their Allies . . . . .	62
Interests and Ideas . . . . .	67
V. CLOTHES, CULTURE, AND CAOUTCHOUC IN CONGO . . . . .	75
The Five Africas . . . . .	75
Leopold's Altruism . . . . .	79
International Altruism at the Berlin Conference . . . . .	83
Altruism or Rubber—The Congo Free State . . . . .	85
Belgium's Future—in Congo . . . . .	90
Congo Diplomacy . . . . .	96
VI. FIVE DECADES OF BUSINESS AND DIPLOMATIC BARGAINING IN WEST AFRICA . . . . .	98
Earning Knighthood in Nigeria . . . . .	98
Bismarck Executes the Purposes of Providence . . . . .	102
France Rounds Out an Empire . . . . .	106
The Negro Republic of Liberia—and Mr. Firestone . . . . .	109
The Value of French West Africa . . . . .	110
A Colonial Cinderella—French Congo . . . . .	113
Cocoa and Palm Oil in British West Africa . . . . .	115
Germany's Share . . . . .	117

CHAPTER	PAGE
VII. THE CONQUEST AND EXPLOITATION OF EAST AFRICA . . . . .	122
Anglo-German Rivalry . . . . .	122
The Anglo-German Agreement . . . . .	126
The Uganda Affair . . . . .	128
Black and White in Kenya . . . . .	130
France in Madagascar . . . . .	133
Italy in Somaliland . . . . .	136
VIII. A CLIMAX—IN THE SUDAN . . . . .	139
The Setting for the Struggle . . . . .	139
France Thwarts British Plans . . . . .	144
Italy's Defeat in Abyssinia . . . . .	148
A French Flag at Fashoda . . . . .	150
The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan . . . . .	154
Independent Abyssinia . . . . .	156
IX. THE LEGACY OF CECIL RHODES . . . . .	160
Diamonds and Gold . . . . .	160
Rhodes the Empire Builder . . . . .	165
The Jameson Raid . . . . .	173
The Boer War . . . . .	177
Briton, Boer, and Black in South Africa . . . . .	181
X. NORTH AFRICA AND THE GREAT POWERS . . . . .	188
Avenging an Insult—Algeria . . . . .	188
<i>Coup de Fortune ou de Bourse</i> —Tunis . . . . .	191
Inevitable Necessity in Morocco . . . . .	197
A Crisis and a Conference . . . . .	202
"Economic Equality" in Morocco . . . . .	209
Another Crisis—Agadir . . . . .	211
French Morocco and the Riffians . . . . .	214
Italy's Vital Interest in Libia . . . . .	218
The Entering Wedge in Egypt . . . . .	223
British Reforms and the Independence of Egypt . . . . .	230
"Independent" Egypt . . . . .	233
XI. NEAR EASTERN QUESTIONS OLD AND NEW . . . . .	237
Two Near Eastern Questions . . . . .	237
The Bagdad Railway Concession . . . . .	239
More Than a Railway . . . . .	245
The Bosnian Crisis . . . . .	249
Diplomatic Bargaining, 1910-1914 . . . . .	251
The Balkan Crisis, 1912-1914 . . . . .	257
War and Peace . . . . .	259
Petroleum and Politics . . . . .	263
Turkish Nationalism . . . . .	267
Arab Nationalism . . . . .	269

# CONTENTS

xiii

CHAPTER	PAGE
<b>XII. ANGLO-RUSSIAN RIVALRY IN THE MIDDLE EAST</b> . . . . .	273
Russian Aggression and British Precautions . . . . .	273
The Anglo-Russian Agreement . . . . .	278
The Effect on Persia . . . . .	281
Nationalist Persia and International Petroleum . . . . .	284
Central Asia . . . . .	287
<b>XIII. IMPERIALISM IN SOUTHERN ASIA</b> . . . . .	290
From Chartered Company to Empire . . . . .	290
Indian Nationalism and British Reforms . . . . .	295
A Gentle Rebel—Gandhi . . . . .	303
Indian Problems . . . . .	308
French Admirals in Indo-China . . . . .	312
Burma and Siam . . . . .	317
<b>XIV. THE BATTLE OF CONCESSIONS IN THE FAR EAST</b> . . . . .	320
Opening the Door for Merchants and Missionaries . . . . .	321
The Sino-Japanese War . . . . .	330
The Leased Ports . . . . .	334
The "Battle of Concessions" . . . . .	336
The Boxers . . . . .	342
The Russo-Japanese War . . . . .	344
Revolution in China . . . . .	347
Japan's Opportunity . . . . .	351
The Washington Conference . . . . .	355
The Stakes of Imperialism . . . . .	357
Japanese Imperialism . . . . .	360
China's Risorgimento . . . . .	364
Dollar Diplomacy . . . . .	366
The Consortium . . . . .	370
<b>XV. FORTUNES OF WAR AND PROFITS OF PEACE IN PACIFIC ISLANDS</b> . . . . .	373
The Setting . . . . .	373
The Culture System in the Dutch East Indies . . . . .	375
The British Islands . . . . .	381
The Copra King and Germany's Lost Islands . . . . .	387
The Minor Rôle of France . . . . .	391
An Unintentional Conquest . . . . .	392
Educating the Filipinos . . . . .	396
Sugar and Destiny in Hawaii . . . . .	399
The Washington Conference Again . . . . .	402
<b>XVI. THE POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES TOWARD LATIN AMERICA</b> . . . . .	407
The Monroe Doctrine and Imperialism . . . . .	407
Cuba and the Spanish War . . . . .	416

CHAPTER	PAGE
Porto Rico . . . . .	422
Canal Construction and Dollar Diplomacy in Central America . . . . .	423
Intervention in Haiti and Santo Domingo . . . . .	433
Oil and Turmoil in Mexico . . . . .	437
North American Interests in South America . . . . .	450
Pan-Americanism . . . . .	452
<b>XVII. NATIONALISM VERSUS IMPERIALISM IN</b>	
EUROPE . . . . .	457
The Survival of the Weak . . . . .	457
Economic and Military Imperialism in Europe Since 1914 . . . . .	460
Concessionaire Imperialism and Soviet Russia . . . . .	465
American Finance and European Independence . . . . .	469
<b>XVIII. THE LEAGUE AND ITS MANDATES . . . . .</b>	<b>473</b>
Secret Treaties or Self-Determination . . . . .	473
President Wilson and the Mandate System . . . . .	478
Establishment of the Mandate System . . . . .	484
American Interests . . . . .	485
"A" Mandates in the Near East . . . . .	487
"B" Mandates in Central Africa . . . . .	498
"C" Mandates in the South Seas and South Africa . . . . .	502
Some Defects . . . . .	506
The Value of International Criticism . . . . .	509
<b>XIX. CONCLUSIONS . . . . .</b>	<b>513</b>
The Measure of Imperialism . . . . .	513
Does Imperialism Pay?—The Problem of Marketing Surplus Goods . . . . .	526
Investing Surplus Capital . . . . .	535
"Surplus" Population . . . . .	540
Raw Materials and Imperialism . . . . .	542
The Civilizing Mission . . . . .	558
<b>INDEX . . . . .</b>	<b>567</b>

## MAPS

	PAGE
African Possessions of European Powers Before 1875 . . . . .	77
Central Africa . . . . .	94
French Africa . . . . .	112
Africa, 1926 . . . . .	118
East Africa . . . . .	124
The Contest for Abyssinia and the Sudan, 1894-1899 . . . . .	140
South Africa . . . . .	163
North Africa . . . . .	190
Turkish Railways in 1918 . . . . .	242
Asia . . . . .	274
Indo-China . . . . .	313
The Far East . . . . .	324
The Pacific . . . . .	374
The Lands of the Caribbean Sea . . . . .	426
Mandates in the Near East . . . . .	488
The British Empire . . . . .	520

# IMPERIALISM AND WORLD POLITICS IN THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

## CHAPTER I

### SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPERIALISM

#### WORLD CONQUEST AND WORLD UNREST

THE American public is barely beginning to realize the significance of the present-day imperialism, which is now approaching its dénouement. Of ancient imperialism, of the empires of Alexander, of Cyrus, of Cæsar, we have heard much and of Napoleon's spectacular exploits every schoolboy has read. But the realms conquered by military emperors of past ages were baubles, trifles compared with the far-flung dominions which have been won, more often with the pen than by the sword, in our own supposedly prosaic generation. It is with this contemporary empire-building, and its effects on international relations, on our prosperity and our security, on industry and civilization, that this study is concerned.

Little as the general public may realize the fact, imperialism is the most impressive achievement and the most momentous world-problem of our age. Perhaps this statement should be thrust home. More than half of the world's land surface, and more than a billion human beings, are included in the colonies and "backward countries" dominated by a few imperialist nations. Every man, woman and child in Great Britain has ten colonial subjects, black, brown and yellow. For every acre in France there are twenty in the French colonies and protectorates. Italy is one-sixth as large as her colonies; Portugal, one twenty-third; Belgium, one-eightieth. The nations of western Europe are dwarfs beside their colonial possessions.

How prevalent imperialism was in Europe before the war.

and still remains, it is difficult for Americans to appreciate, since the "average" American has been accustomed, at any rate before the disillusionment of 1919, to think that seizure of territory was somewhat akin to theft, (that militarism and aggressive war were out of date among democratic nations), that conquest was contrary to the normal principles of international morality, albeit some slight deviation from such principles might be pardoned or ignored. If we desired Louisiana or Alaska, we purchased it; if we annexed the Philippines, we paid a price in gold.<sup>1</sup>

This, however, is not and has not been the attitude of the imperialist nations of Europe, or of Europeanized Japan. French statesmen have vehemently declared the conquest of colonies to be not merely permissible, but imperative for France, and the Third Republic has won almost five million square miles. Italian patriots have proclaimed it a sacred duty, and Italy, despite all discouragements, has gained almost a million square miles. Englishmen have regarded it, in Kipling's words, as "the white man's burden" which civilized peoples dare not shirk; and in the last half-century four million square miles have been added to the British Empire, besides many a veiled protectorate and sphere of influence, not formally annexed. Germany at first under Bismarck's cautious guidance abstained from African and Asiatic empire-building, but at length plunged into world-politics, rather late, to appropriate a million square miles in Africa and the East Indies, to dominate the rich Asiatic empire of the Ottoman sultans; and, finally, to stake all and lose all in the titanic conflict of 1914. Austria-Hungary, as lesser partner in the Central European coalition, strove to master the Balkans. Russian tsars, not content with their broad domain in Europe and Siberia, stretched acquisitive hands into Central Asia, Persia, Manchuria and Mongolia, and looked hungrily on Turkey, Tibet, and Afghanistan. Japan, aptly imitating Europe, took Formosa, Korea, part of Manchuria, Shantung, German islands in the Pacific, and, during the Great War, attempted at a single stroke to make all China virtually a Japanese protectorate. All the Great Powers save the United States boldly and frankly set themselves to the

<sup>1</sup> The payment, in this case, was not strictly speaking a purchase price, cf. *infra*, p. 396.

epic task, in the nineteenth century, of carving out stupendous colonial empires; and even the United States, feeling the same urge to action, reached into the Pacific and into the Caribbean for modest parcels of colonial territory.

Nor were the Great Powers more imperialist than several of the smaller nations. Belgium, with her vast property in Central Africa; Portugal, with colonies larger than the German Kaiser's; Spain, clinging tenaciously to a strip of Morocco together with pitiable fragments of her former colonial grandeur; and Holland, glorying in a magnificent East-Indian island empire, have vied with stronger states in seeking the rewards which all hoped to win in the stirring game of world politics.

"World politics"—it is a phrase to conjure with! Imperialism has given birth to world-wide empires, to world-wide diplomacy. Great Britain is not, in truth, a European nation, but the nucleus of a universal power. The tricolor of France flies in the Congo jungle, on Sahara's sands, above Indo-Chinese rice-fields. European diplomatists act the drama of international relations on a stage as broad as earth. Often a single diplomatic bargain, signed so easily in a European capital, affects the destinies of unwitting millions in all four quarters of the globe. The Anglo-French agreement of 1904, for example, dealt with Newfoundland in America, the New Hebrides in Oceania, Siam in Asia, Morocco and Egypt and other colonies in Africa. Such is the meaning of world politics. And imperialism is the root and *raison d'être* of world politics.

If from this commanding standpoint one reviews the recent history of international relations, the alliances, ententes, crises and wars reveal a new meaning. Almost without exception, they were but surface manifestations of the swift, deep current of imperialism. When France and England trembled on the verge of war in 1898, during the Fashoda Crisis, imperialist rivalry for a million or so square miles of the African Sudan was the cause. The German emperor's celebrated telegram to President Kruger, congratulating him on having repulsed a British invasion, was more than a breach of international etiquette; it was a revelation of tense imperialist competition in South Africa, and as such it both angered and alarmed British statesmen. The Moroccan "crises" of 1905 and 1911, which so nearly embroiled all Europe in war, were not unique results

of some peculiarly German—or peculiarly French—aggressiveness; rather, they were two of the innumerable explosions which have been caused when the aims of imperialist nations happened to cross. The South African War of 1899 may have been inaugurated by truculent Boers, but it would never have been fought had English imperialism not been active in South Africa; nor would the Spanish-American War have occurred (if there had been no American interests in Cuba). The greatest war the twentieth century had witnessed before 1914 was the purely imperialist Russo-Japanese struggle for Korea and Manchuria. (And the greatest of all wars was caused more by imperialism than by any other single factor). Americans who prefer to believe that the catastrophe of 1914 was brought about by the personal vagaries of William Hohenzollern may cherish their belief if they will, but the facts are opposed to it. The very alignment of European powers was dictated by imperialism, not by race or democracy or kinship of culture. Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey were allied by Teutonic domination of the Near East. (Republican France and monarchist England were bound together by the far-reaching imperialist bargain of 1904; liberal England and tsarist Russia, by an agreement of 1907 regarding imperialist interests in Persia, Afghanistan, Tibet.

It is easy to heap up the evidence, though no labored proof is intended here. When the German ambassador in 1914 offered to respect the integrity of Belgium and France, the significant question of Sir Edward Grey was whether Germany intended to take the French colonies. During the war, even when hardest pressed on the battlefields of France, the Allies spared troops to conquer the German colonies and occupy choice portions of Turkey. When the German government secretly formulated its war-aims for communication to President Wilson, a larger share of the world's colonies was the important point. The Allies, for their part, while professing publicly their interest in small nations and the sanctity of treaties, quietly arranged by a series of secret treaties the division to be made of Germany's colonies and of Turkey if victory should be theirs. And when victory was achieved, the Allies made it one of their first concerns at the Paris Peace Conference to wring from President Wilson's unwilling lips an assurance that, though the coveted colonial

and Near Eastern territories might be nominally internationalized as "mandates," (the mandates would be given to the Allies in accordance with the secret treaties.)

Contrary to a quite general impression, imperialism is not a closed story now that the German colonies have been divided. The climax has not yet been reached; the dénouement is still uncertain. Never was imperialist rivalry so keen as after the Great War. We are now entering a period of intensified international economic competition, in which the problem of imperialism is becoming all the more acute because most of the backward areas available for colonies have already been appropriated. (Competition is stimulated by scarcity.) There are no longer vast unclaimed reaches of Africa to sate the appetites of rising powers. Moreover, tariff barriers are being erected in hitherto open colonies; governments are taking a more vital interest and sometimes officially participating in the international scramble for oil, railway and mining concessions; the tide of immigrant "surplus population" from Europe and Asia is being turned back upon itself by American restrictions, to seek new outlets; backward peoples are fast becoming educated to the point of providing a really important, and rapidly increasing, market for manufactures; raw materials are becoming more and more the stakes of diplomacy.

A few instances of the increasing economic importance of colonies will make these general statements more convincing. The exports of the United States to our own and other colonies amounted in 1900 to less than one-fifth of a billion dollars; in 1913, to two-thirds of a billion; in 1920, to more than a billion and a half. In twenty years our exports to colonies were multiplied by 8.8, other exports only by 5.4. These figures are mute witnesses to the all-important fact that the United States, like other industrial nations, is becoming increasingly dependent on non-European countries as markets for manufactured goods. Colonial markets are growing much more rapidly than European markets. To put it even more clearly, non-European countries absorbed only 23% of the exports of the United States before 1900 (average 1895-9), but their share rose to 40% in 1913, then 46% in 1920, and 49.8% in 1923. Almost sixty per cent of the new business which American exporters have gained since the 1890's has been found in Asia, Africa, and America. To gen-

eralize, in the decade from 1913 to 1923 the imports of colonies increased by 51% while the imports of other countries increased by less than 16%. Colonies in 1923 meant five billion dollars' worth of export business, of which two billions had been added in a decade.<sup>1</sup>

Conversely, as industrial countries import more raw materials and foodstuffs, colonial sources of supply are drawn upon more and more heavily. To take the United States as an example, again, the value of imports from colonies increased almost ten-fold in the two decades from 1900 to 1920. From colonies and quasi-colonial "backward countries" we get our crude rubber, much of our oil, fertilizers for farmlands, fruit and coffee for the breakfast table, chocolate and sugar for the confectioner, tobacco, tea, hemp for rope, and jute for all the millions of bags in which goods are packed for shipment, indispensable manganese for our steel-mills. Inconceivably more do the less richly endowed European nations rely upon colonial products. Colonial investments, too, are multiplying, mounting into billions of dollars for the United States and into tens of billions for the imperialist nations collectively; more will be said later about their importance. Colonies and backward countries, spoils of diplomacy before the war, are vital features of everyday business to-day. Whether they are closed or open, developed or retarded, monopolized or shared freely, will be a much more significant question to-morrow than it was yesterday.

Perhaps even more challenging as an omen of the approaching climax of imperialism is the uneasy stirring of non-European races which have been subjected to enough of European rule to become restive. During the last few years a spirit of rebellious self-determination has seized upon hitherto inert subject races: Nationalist Turkey has turned against European exploitation, Nationalist Egypt has won independence; Indian Nationalism has assumed monumental proportions; Nationalist Persia and Afghanistan have cast off British shackles; Filipinos have become more insistent in their pleas for independence.

Whether this movement of the non-European peoples for self-government will reach peaceful maturity is a grave question

<sup>1</sup> The foregoing statements are based on computations using statistics in the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* and the *Statesman's Year-Book*.