
UNIT 15 CONQUEST AND APPROPRIATION

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15.1 INTRODUCTION

Between 1500 and 1800, Western Europe acquired 35% of the globe's land surface. This is despite the fact that in 1800, Europe's population was only 190 out of 900 millions living on the planet earth. Great Britain was the architect of the biggest overseas empire, an empire over which "the sun never set". The population of Great Britain in 1838 was only 19 million but this country acquired large chunks of Asia and Africa with many millions of inhabitants. The scholars of European expansion agree on the superiority of European political organization and Western warfare over the various types of non-Western people. Gunpowder armies and modern state infrastructure of the West Europeans aided expansion in the extra-European world. However, technological edge and managerial superiority by themselves are inadequate to explain European superiority over the non-European world. In order to explain western supremacy the world over, we need to focus on the process in which initial technological edges were transformed into huge political advantages. This Unit, hence, is a brief exploration of European expansion into different parts of the globe.

15.2 THE AGE OF SAIL

Western naval supremacy over the oceans was the first step in the process of European expansion. The superiority of the Western navies especially as regards long-range bulk transport was one of the principal factors behind the successful establishment of maritime empires in the extra-European world. The unlimited oceanic range of the Western ships gave them what could be termed as global reach. Oceanic transportation at per tonne and per person was cheaper than any other comparable form of transportation. European superiority in scientific knowledge, naval technology and finally naval artillery enabled them to dominate the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian oceans.

The Indian Ocean comprises one hundred and forty thousand square miles of water which lie between Asia and Africa, from the Cape of Good Hope to the Malay Archipelago. It covers about 20% of the earth's hydro space. But for the occasional appearance of the Portuguese, Dutch and the French navies, the Indian Ocean between the seventeenth and the early twentieth centuries remained under British control. The Royal Navy with its ocean going battleships established what could be termed as 'sea control'. In 1786, a base was established at Penang at the northern entrance to the Straits of Malacca. With the capture of the Straits of Malacca in 1759 and Singapore in

1824, British control over the eastern approach of the Indian Ocean was complete. In 1622, the British captured Ormuz, dominating the entrance to the Persian Gulf. Thus the British secured control over the western approach to the Indian Ocean. Security of the western approaches of the Indian Ocean required control over Egypt. In 1801 an expedition was sent to Egypt against Napoleon's Army. The Middle East emerged as the soft underbelly of British control of the Indian Ocean region. By the early 1800s, the Russian Empire had expanded into the Caucasus and had occupied an extensive tract of north Persia. This raised the fear of an eventual Russian push to the Gulf. So, southern Persia came under the British sphere of influence. Aden fell in 1839 to a British naval expedition launched from Bombay.

Though some of the Afro-Asian regimes maintained navies, these were coastal craft. Hence, the Afro-Asian states could not challenge the maritime supremacy of the Western naval powers. The passing of control of the Indian Ocean from Asian to European hands was a matter of great political and economic importance. The Arabs lost control over the spice trade between South East Asia, India, Egypt and Arabia. The maritime powers also enabled the European trading companies to establish coastal enclaves in most of the territories whose shores lapped the Indian Ocean. These coastal enclaves became the bases from which the Europeans expanded. For instance, the Dutch Navy aided the VOC (Dutch East India Company) which was founded in 1602 to establish control over the Ambon islands and finally over Indonesia. And the Royal Navy allowed the East India Company to establish an empire in South Asia.

During the second half of the seventeenth century, the West European powers were constructing battleships (two deckers) displacing 1,100-1,600 tonnes and armed with 24- pounder (11 kg) guns. Firepower was enhanced by the replacement of the bronze cannons with iron cannons. Advances in cast iron production resulted in the manufacture of cheaper and more dependable guns. In contrast, the South Asian ships' planking was sewn together and not nailed as in case of the European ships. The Indian ships were sewn with coir. So, if the South Asian ships tried to fire heavy guns than they would have disintegrated. It was the same with the Chinese junks and the Arab *dhow*s. The Afro-Asian navies were no match against the firepower generated by the European ships.

In 1839, two British frigates defeated 29 Chinese war junks near Hong Kong. Frigates were built for speed and hardiness. A frigate was a long and fairly low ship carrying its main battery of 18-pounders on a single deck with 13-14 ports on each side according to whether it was a 38 or 36 gun ship. After 1814, frigates with forty 20-pounder guns were launched. The frigates carried six months provision. This meant that they could sail anywhere in the world without requiring to touch any port. The frigates were built of oak, the main beams being at least a foot square in cross-section, and the planking four to five inches thick. The masts and spars were of pine from the Baltic. The European ships' crews were sustained by hard biscuits and beef. Occasionally they had pork pickled in wine. In addition, they also had cheese, onions, garlic and fish. The officers had access to dried fruits. However, due to lack of fresh vegetables and inadequate intake of vitamins, the crew suffered from scurvy. An anti-dote against scurvy was the introduction of limejuice.

Besides technology, in theory also the Afro-Asians were lagging behind the maritime European powers. Theorization and conceptualization of warfare is a vital factor which differentiated the West Europeans from the Asians. From the late fifteenth century, the advent of printing brought about an increase in the number of treatises on combat manuals and various other related technical subjects. Printing made possible transmission and adaptation of knowledge throughout a wide region. Apart from the manuals coming out from the German presses, the woodcuts also depicted in a pictographic manner the

various modes of combat. One of the characteristics of the theoretical works produced during Renaissance was the application of geometrical figures and symbols. Diagrams were used for elucidating theories as well as for analyzing the different stages of particular great battles. The eighteenth century European states established naval schools where mathematics along with Newton's *Principia* was taught. But non-European powers did not set up naval academies for educating and training the officers and sailors. Let us turn the focus on non-European navies.

15.2.1 The Non-European Navies

The Mughals had a riverine navy which conducted marine warfare against the zamindars of Bengal and the Magh pirates in the Chittagong region during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. Aurangzeb realized that he needed a powerful navy for challenging the domination of the high sea by the 'hat wearers'. When Aurangzeb was thinking of setting up an ocean going navy, his *Wazir* Jafar Khan told him that there was enough money and timber available but adequate number of skilled men was not available for directing the naval enterprise. The Siddis who were allied with the Mughals had ships of 300 to 400 tonnes equipped with cannon. But these ships were no match against the European men of war. The firepower of the Mughal ships was inadequate even against the Asian ships. The Kingdom of Arakan made boats of strong timber with a hard core. And against them, balls thrown by the *zamburaks* and small cannons mounted in the Mughal ships proved ineffective.

The Marakkars were descendants of Arab merchants who came to India in the seventh century AD. Later they became admirals of the Zamorins of Calicut. In 1498, Vasco da Gama arrived at Calicut on the Malabar Coast. In the same year, eight ships sent by Zamorin encountered a single Portuguese caravel. A caravel had a triangular sail and weighed about 200 tonnes. The bronze cannons of the Portuguese ship made mincemeat of the Indian ships which tried to fight with arrows, swords and lances.

Shivaji set up the Maratha navy in 1659. The most famous Maratha admiral was Kanhoji Angre (1669-1729). Kavindra, the court poet of Shivaji, paid tribute to the European maritime superiority in his epic poem *Sivabharata* in the following words: 'And nearly invincible in faring on the high seas.' The shipwrights of Konkan constructed the Maratha ships. They were mostly illiterate. They could not put on paper the plan of the vessel to be constructed. For modernizing his fleet, Kanhoji hired Portuguese deserters. Kanhoji's naval establishment did include some colourful characters. John Plantain a pirate from Jamaica got tired of his trade and decided to settle in India. He took service with Kanhoji. Another Dutch man became a Commodore in Angria's service. In 1699, Kanhoji's fleet was composed of 10 grabs and 50 gallivats. Some of the grabs were of 400 tonnes each. The grabs had two to three masts. They were built to operate in shallow water. The grab was very broad in proportion to length, narrowing from the middle to the end where instead of bows, they had prows, projecting like those of a Mediterranean galley. Each grab had 16 guns and 150 armed men for boarding the enemy vessels. The gallivats were smaller ships. Each gallivat of 120 tonnes had 6 guns and 60 armed men. Some of the crews were armed with muskets. Each gallivat had about 50 oars and they could attain a speed of four miles an hour. These ships carried 6-pounder guns. The guns were lashed to the deck of the ships with ropes. So, when the guns fired, the vessel recoiled with it. The Maratha ships, instead of depending on firepower generated by the broadsides as was the case of the European men of war, fought somewhat like the Roman ships. The Maratha ships were incapable of line action on the high seas. Kanhoji's ships were fast and maneuverable in coastal water but helpless in the open sea and in the ocean. The Maratha naval tactics comprised of sending a number of gallivats with 200 to 300 men in each who were armed with swords. They boarded from all quarters simultaneously attempting to overpower the crew. However,

such techniques were of no use against the firepower of heavy sturdy European ships. In 1739, a single Portuguese frigate defeated Sambhaji Angria's squadron of 17 vessels. Gheria, the Maratha naval headquarters finally fell to the bombardment of British battleships.

15.2.2 Changes in British Naval Power

While the Royal Navy protected the British sea lines of communications, the Company's marine took care of coastal security. By 1934 it had been rechristened as the Royal Indian Navy.

The East India Company established its first trading post at Surat in 1607. In 1661, the island of Bombay formed part of the dowry brought by Catherine of Portugal on the occasion of her marriage to King Charles II of England. It was occupied by the British three years later. This island was leased to the Company for an annual rent of 10 pounds. By 1686, Bombay superseded Surat as the main depot of the East India Company. Bases were required for conducting long range maritime operations. Fort William functioned as an important base for both the Company's marine as well as the Royal Navy. Fort William stored medicines, gun carriages and guns for the ships. In 1805, the Court of Directors and the British government agreed that the possession of Ceylon would not only raise the security of Company's territories in southern India but would also strengthen British hold over the Bay of Bengal. As long as any European maritime power was denied bases in Ceylon, their warships could neither raid Bay of Bengal nor bombard the Coromondal coast. When Ceylon and Pondichery were lost, the French Navy found that Mauritius was too far away for operating around the subcontinent. The lack of a maritime base near India hampered French maritime operations. This in turn choked the supply of men and materials to the French Army under Count de Lally. After the defeat of Lally in the late eighteenth century, there was no European military competition to the East India Company's army in the Indian subcontinent.

The British naval supremacy in the coastal waters of India also shaped land warfare in favour of the Company. In 1765, the Mysore Navy possessed 30 war vessels and a large number of transport ships. In 1768, the desertion of the naval commander Stannet resulted in the destruction of most of the ships of Mysore. In 1779, six British vessels sailed for Bombay under Edward Hughes, a British Vice-Admiral. The same year also witnessed the arrival of six French vessels to Mauritius under Count D'Orves. D'Orves' escorts and the troopships carrying French soldiers who were supposed to cooperate with Haidar Ali sailed from Mauritius. The whole fleet was commanded by Commodore Suffren. While Suffren suffered from lack of a base in India, his rival Hughes had ample reserves of guns, ammunition, timber, spars, canvas, rope, provisions and water available at Madras. When Hughes' fleet anchored at Madras for refitting, the shore batteries guarded the British fleet. In February 1779, Suffren with ten warships escorting 20 troop transports entered the Bay of Bengal. Avoiding Hughes' nine ships, Suffren disembarked the troops who aided Haidar in capturing Cuddalore. During the Second Anglo-Mysore War, a British fleet under Hughes destroyed the fleet of Haidar in Mangalore and Calicut. Then the British fleet threatened Cuddalore. After the destruction of Baillie's force and retreat of Major Munro to Madras, the Madras Presidency requested for military aid to the Bengal Presidency. In response, the Bengal Presidency sent European infantry, European gunners, and guns with carriages, plus numerous barrels of gunpowder to Madras by sea. And these troops took part in the successful battle of Porto Novo against Haidar. In 1786, Tipu established a separate Board of Admiralty with headquarters at Seringapatnam. Tipu's attempt to get aid from France was unsuccessful. And, the Mysore Navy could achieve little against British sea power.

After the defeat of Tipu, there were no more naval challenges from the indigenous powers. In the 1790s, the duties of the Bombay Marine were as follows: protection of trade, suppression of piracy and convoy of transport. In 1791, each of the Company's ships averaged 750-800 tonnes with a crew of 101 men. In the 1830s, the core of the British Indian navy was composed of several iron steamers. One typical steamer was *Indus* which was 304 tonnes with a 60 horse power engine and manned by 52 crews. Of the crews about half were Europeans and the rest Indians. The armament consisted of a 3-pounder brass gun, and a 12-pounder 4.5 inch howitzer. In 1863 a marine survey department was started which aided naval communication along the hitherto uncharted waters of the Indian Ocean. In 1884, the duties of the Royal Indian Marine also involved transport of troops and survey of the coasts and harbours.

In 1848 when Mulraj the *Diwan* of Multan revolted, the Second Anglo-Sikh War broke out. And then the Company's navy practised what could be categorized as 'Littoral Warfare'. The *Indus* Flotilla transported men, guns and stores 800 miles up the Indus to within a mile and half of Multan. During the siege of Multan, the two steamers moved above the city and severed all water communication between the fort held by Mulraj's men and the rebel chieftains in west Punjab. The steamers protected the British bridge, pontoon boats and the commissariat boats carrying grain for the Company's troops. These steamers were also employed in evacuating the wounded British officers back to Karachi. Another steamer with its two 10-inch mortars provided firepower support. The Company's marine also provided a force of 100 ratings and seven officers who participated in the siege of Multan fort.

Naval power came to the aid of the British during the crisis of 1857 Mutiny. Towards the end of May 1857, steamers brought white troops from Madras to Calcutta. The Royal Navy also brought reinforcements from Britain and Crimea into India during 1857-58. Military operations in India were dependent on adequate supplies of mules and horses. Supremacy over the sea enabled the Raj to import war animals from abroad. Special mules were bought at Argentina and were brought into India. Horses were brought from England and Australia into South Asia.

Sea power enabled the British government in India to project power in various parts of Asia. The Company was able to put together a bureaucracy capable of launching distant amphibious operations. Thanks to the Royal Navy's supremacy in the Indian Ocean, the Raj's troopships faced no threat. During the Dutch War of 1795, it was decided to send troops from India to Malacca. Ships were chartered to carry Indian cavalry and infantry to China during the nineteenth century. The Company's sea going steamers proved their worth during the Burma Wars. A squadron consisting of four steam frigates and two sloops all armed with 8-inch guns as well as 32-pounders provided firepower and logistical support to the Company's army invading Burma in the early 1820s. The frigate's fire silenced the Burmese guns in Rangoon and allowed the Company's troops to land. The steamers of the Bengal Marine and ships of the Royal Navy transported about 6,000 men from Madras to Rangoon. One of the principal reasons for the annexation of the Arakan during the First Anglo-Burma War (1824-26) was the necessity to ensure control over the eastern portion of the Bay of Bengal. Burma teak was highly valued by the Royal Navy and the British merchantmen. And this was a contributory factor for the Second Anglo-Burma War during 1852-53. In 1891, the Royal Navy assumed responsibility for the Australian Station.

In the seventeenth century, the Portuguese in East Africa faced some opposition from the Omani naval power. Close cooperation between the gunboats and land columns aided French conquest of Senegal and Western Sudan. And naval control of upper Niger facilitated the conquest of Western Sudan in the 1890s. Especially the emergence of shallow draught steamboats equipped with guns enabled European penetration into

the interiors of Africa through the rivers. The British penetration into southern Nigeria through the Niger delta involved use of naval vessels to shell villages and ferry troops and supplies. The African canoes made of wood could traverse the lagoons. The light guns lashed with ropes on the canoes could not be aimed properly. Thus the African canoes had no chance against the steel guns and steel hulls of the European steamers.

15.3 EUROPEAN PENETRATION IN THE NEW WORLD

Warfare in North and South America before the coming of the Europeans was constrained by the low level of technology and religious and magical elements. Inter-tribal warfare was not that lethal. In the far north of North America from AD 1000 onwards, the Palaeo-Eskimos of the eastern Arctic retreated before the eastward migration of the sea faring Neo Eskimos. They used harpoons for hunting whales. In addition, they also used sinew backed bows, dog sleds and fortifications made of stone. In the later sixteenth century, they settled in the Labrador coast. In Ontario and in St. Lawrence Valley the American tribes were farming communities. The villages were fortified with palisades.

Bruce Lenman claims that in the early eighteenth century, the Dutch and the French by introducing gunpowder among the American tribes raised the level of organized violence. The original inhabitants of the New World did not use iron. Most of them employed Stone Age technologies. The Aztec warriors of Mexico armed with bronze tipped arrows and obsidian (a glass like substance formed by volcanic eruptions) rimmed wooden clubs were no match against the steel helmeted firearms equipped Conquistadores. Obsidian broke easily in contact with the iron swords of the Spaniards. Hence, Hernan Cortes with 500 Spaniards and 14 cannon was able to defeat the Aztec Empire repeatedly between 1519 and 1521. Similarly between 1531 and 1533, 168 Spaniards supported by four cannon defeated the Inca Empire in Peru. This was possible because the Incas used clubs with semi circular bronze ends that lacked a sharp edge. They broke easily in contact with the iron shields of the Spaniards. The Incas tried to stem the European tide of conquest unsuccessfully by throwing stones from slings and rolling down boulders from the slopes of the hills. At the siege of Cuzco in 1536, 200,000 Inca soldiers were defeated by 190 Spanish soldiers. The discovery of gold and diamond led to extensive Portuguese colonization of Brazil in the seventeenth century. The settlers pushed ahead with the aid of bayonet and volley firing techniques. Forts were constructed for resisting and harassing the raiding parties of the Indians.

In addition to the technological gap, the American tribes suffered further due to their culture of warfare. While European warfare aimed at killing the enemy, 'native' American warfare was aimed at capturing the enemy by wounding him. The objective of the victors in American warfare was not to annihilate the enemy but to use him for religious sacrifice or as captive labourers. For the Red Indians capturing scalps and the captives was evidence of victory. But, the European settlers came and appropriated the tribes' land and livestock. In North America the European approach to war was particularly brutal. For instance in 1687, the Governor of Quebec launched a campaign against the Westerly Iroquois people. Villages were burnt, corn destroyed, livestock slaughtered and graves were pilfered. Again the 'native' Americans had never seen horses. The war horses imported from Europe not only provided mobility to the European soldiers but also caused a grave psychological shock among the Indian tribes. Gradually the Indians were concentrated into smaller and smaller regions known as reserves or sanctuaries, as if they were animals. Lack of food and disease reduced their numbers considerably and continuous immigration from Europe changed the demographic balance in favour of the white settlers.

The French towards the end of the seventeenth century realized that without Indian allies it was impossible to conduct colonial warfare successfully in North America. In 1712, the French allied with the Ottawa and Potawatomie attacked the Fox tribe. The missionaries under French tutelage played an important role in playing off the various North American Indian tribes against each other. The linear close order tactical formations of the Western infantry though useful in the plains of Europe, was not very successful in the midst of the jungles of North America. The Indian tribes of North America, who were allied with the European powers during the seventeenth century, taught the Europeans several tactical lessons like marksmanship, scouting, looking for cover and concealment in the jungles.

Cooperation with the Indians was essential even in Central and South America. In 1520 Cortes had to retreat from the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan. In 1521, he retook the city with Spanish soldiers equipped with cannon and arquebuses who were supported by 25,000 Indian allies. Cortes' conquest of the Aztec Empire would not have been possible without the support of the Tlaxcalans who provided warriors and supplies. Again Diego de Almagro, the leader of the Spanish forces was able to defeat Emperor Manco Inca in the Andes only by co-opting Manco's brother Paullu and his followers.

15.4 THE COLLAPSE OF AFRO-ASIAN REGIMES AND WESTERN PENETRATION INTO AUSTRALIA

In India, unlike in America, Australia and Siberia, demography aided the defenders. After all, the South Asians were not swamped by numerically superior number of white settlers and European colonists. In 1700, Asia contained 70% of the world's population. India in 1700 had 180 million people which meant about 20% of the world's population. Besides human resources, Asia's economic power also remained impressive. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, Asia remained the world's centre of artisan production and accounted for a huge volume of world trade. However, economic potential and demographic resources did not necessarily generate great military power.

For explaining European military superiority over Afro-Asia in general and India in particular, most of the historians followed Edward Gibbon's emphasis on gunpowder weapons. Superior organization of the polity and military technology assisted expansion of British power in eighteenth century Asia. Geoffrey Parker asserts that the military balance changed in favour of the West because of the Military Revolution which unfolded between 1500 and 1750. The Military Revolution on land actually was an amalgamation of two revolutions. The first involved a Revolution in Siege Warfare due to the emergence of *trace Italienne* (star shaped scientific fortress architecture) and siege artillery. Then a Revolution in Field Warfare occurred due to the rise of firearms equipped infantry supported by field artillery. Another characteristic of the Military Revolution was sustained growth in the size of the European armies. The late sixteenth century witnessed Europe's new way of making warfare which involved bastioned fortifications, scientific gunnery and disciplined infantry tactics. All these resulted in a battlefield revolution. Jeremy Black writes that European military innovations like the bayonet, flintlock musket, grape and canister firing field artillery opened up a major gap in capability between firearms equipped European armies and their non-European opponents. One of the chief characteristics of the firearms equipped European infantry was that the men were drilled in the style of the Roman legions. Superior administrative and political capability generated effective tactical discipline on the part of the Western forces. Black continues that from the sixteenth century onwards, European forces acquired an edge in keeping cohesion

and control in battle much longer than their adversaries. And this permitted more sophisticated tactics in moving units on the battlefield and more effective fire discipline.

The gunpowder revolution in Europe established modern state structures that in turn were able to sustain costly firepower armies. The Western advantage in military techniques and infrastructure rested on foundations of European economic, social and institutional changes. From the mid-seventeenth century, the impersonal bureaucracy pushed the semi-independent military entrepreneurs (feudal knights and mercenaries) to the margin. John Keegan asserts that by the fifteenth century gunpowder allowed the French monarchy to cow down the refractory chieftains thus giving birth to a centralized state structure backed by a fiscal system. After 1550, armour penetrating firearms used by the infantry in the state's payroll drove the feudal cavalry from the field. And the artillery of the king destroyed the forts of the semi-independent knights. Artillery was so costly that only the monarchy could maintain it. The Europeans were well advanced in the field of international finance. The international credit network sustained the Western military activities across the globe.

Compared to the Western warfare, the backwardness of the Afro-Asians was evident in the theory and weapons of warfare as well as regarding the institutions supporting organized violence. The Afro-Asian armies lacked any regular cohesive organization. Soldiering was a part time occupation of the cultivators and pay was irregular. Professional standing armies were absent in pre-colonial Afro-Asia. Hence, the Afro-Asian soldiers were indisciplined. In battles, the Africans and the Asians fought as aggregates of individuals and not as cohesive bodies of soldiers. Raiding and counter-raiding before the monsoon constituted the principal method of fighting among the non-European rulers. For instance the Maratha force was mostly composed of light cavalry designed for levying tribute rather than for organized conquest. Asian warfare was characterized by the use of elephants and inadequate cohesion among the mounted arm during hand to hand combat. In the seventeenth century, the African and Asian method of warfare proved ineffective against the European warfare which was characterized by the use of bayonets, flintlocks, pre-fabricated paper cartridges, standardization of artillery's ball, ball weight and firing procedures.

However, a point of caution is necessary. To win in Africa and Asia, the British had to imitate non-Western techniques of conducting grand strategy. This meant carrying on negotiations and intrigues with partners within the enemy coalition simultaneously while conducting field operations. Then the Indians as horsemen and sepoy of the British led Sepoy Army and land revenue of the Bengal Presidency enabled Britain to conquer India. In the first half of the nineteenth century, about 220,000 sepoy and horsemen fought for the British both inside and outside India in regions as far as Africa and China.

Warfare in South-East Asia was also lagging behind the type of organized violence practised by the West. In pre-colonial Philippines, warfare was characterized by small scale seasonal raids rather than pitched battles involving sizeable number of soldiers. In the Indonesian Archipelago, pre-European warfare was characterized by headhunting. The combatants fought with sword and javelins. Prisoners were sold after the campaign. Occasionally destruction of plantations and villages also occurred. Bloody conflict resulting in total destruction of the enemy force and permanent conquest were trends introduced by the Europeans.

In 1788, the British established a base in Australia. In the early 1790s, they explored the coast of New Zealand. Initially, the British were interested in Australia as a base for the furtherance of the East Indies and China trade. The Admiralty was interested in the timber and flax of New Zealand and Norfolk Islands to furnish naval stores for the

Royal Navy's vessels operating in the East. Free settlement in Australia by the white settlers started from the 1820s. During the early period, the initial settlers were soldiers, marines and convicts. In Australia there were about 700 tribes. Initially they tried to fight the British by using magic and charms. But these techniques were obviously of no use against the invaders. Aboriginal warfare was merely an extension of the hunt. It emphasized ambush and skirmishing. They lacked knowledge about sophisticated tactical systems for conducting open warfare. The aborigines were wiped out by the British mounted musketeers. Further, the aborigines had no immunity against the diseases introduced by the British. Smallpox, measles, influenza and tuberculosis proved deadly to them. However, the Maori tribesmen of New Zealand opposed the British boldly. Between 1845 and 1872, the British had to mobilize 18,000 white soldiers against the Maoris.

Siberia was a vast region inhabited by small numbers of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes. They were engaged in hunting and fishing. The Russian merchants were interested in fur produced by this region. In the first half of the seventeenth century, Russia conquered Siberia by a systematic construction of a chain of forts. As the Russians crossed the Ural Mountains, they entered the West Siberian Plain inhabited by the Tartars. Tobolsk on the bank of the river Ob was founded in 1587. In the Central Siberian Plain, Turukhansk on the bank of Yenisey came up in 1619 and Yakutsk on the bank of the river Lena was founded in 1632. The Manchu dynasty of China opposed Russian advance in the Far East. The Russians equipped with cannons defeated the Manchus in the Amur Valley. The farthest points were Nizhne Kolymsk and Okhotsk founded in 1644 and 1648, respectively. The Chukchi and Koryak tribes of Kamchatka were finally subdued in the eighteenth century. From the defeated tribes, the Russians demanded heavy *iasak* (tribute) in furs.

The nature of warfare in Africa was also limited and backward. During the second half of the eighteenth century, the West Africans used firearms for acquiring slaves rather than creating a strong empire. European drill and discipline were alien to the Africans. The indigenous military system lacked staff, logistical apparatus, regular subdivision and a command structure. There was no concept of regular payment and drill in the African armies. Hence, the African armies were incapable of maneuver in the field of fire. In 1847, the *Amir* of Algeria fielded 50,000 poorly armed and indisciplined irregular troops against 108,000 French troops. In the final analysis the Africans had no machine guns, rifles and steel barrelled field artillery of the European armies. European technical superiority seemed excessive both in set piece battles as well as in siege warfare. The frontal assault of *assegais* (spears) equipped Zulus was easily suppressed by the musket equipped British redcoats. The Africans missed the breechloader revolution. During 1873-4, the British armed with snider rifles easily dealt with the Ashantis equipped with muzzle loaders. In 1898 at the Battle of Omdurman, the Mahdis' *jihadi* supporters equipped with spears and swords were wiped out by Kitchener's riflemen. In 1891, the 95-mm French siege guns reduced the Tukolar fortresses to dust. Non-military technologies like semaphore and telegraph also aided command and control of the European armies.

While by the 1850s most of Asia was under the Europeans, even as late as 1876 less than 10% of Africa was under the Europeans. This was due to lack of surface communication in the jungle - filled continent and the prevalence of diseases which hampered operations of the European armies in the 'dark continent'. In West Africa, half of the white soldiers died within three months of their arrival. The death rate in the Gold Coast (in West Africa) in 1823-6 was 668 per 1000 each year. Malaria and yellow fever were the chief killers of the white men. The final seal on African independence was because, writes Bruce Vandervort, the failure of the various African tribes to

establish and sustain an anti-European coalition. And this allowed the European powers to recruit Africans for expanding and maintaining their empires. The British recruited African infantry from the Gold Coast. And the Portuguese in Angola used the Africans as light infantry. Finally, the French used Senegalese as sharpshooters.

15.5 SUMMARY

While the eighteenth century witnessed the conquest of Asia, European expansion in Africa really gathered speed during the late nineteenth century. Structural contradictions prevented the Mughals, Persians and the Chinese from modernizing their army. They also did not possess the sea faring culture of the Western maritime nations. All these factors resulted in the passing away of the big Asian land empires. Then the culture of warfare in America and Africa also aided European conquest. However, the point to be noted is that burning heat and high humidity in both Asia and Africa forced the imperial powers to utilize Asian and African auxiliaries who further expanded the frontiers of the imperial powers. State organization was virtually non-existent in most parts of the New World and in Africa. All the non-European polities were friable entities and characterized by divisible sovereignty. This made possible playing off various ethno-linguistic and religious groups against each other by the Europeans. This in turn facilitated not only conquest but also consolidation of imperial rule over the two American continents as well as in Afro-Asia. Thus it was a combination of social, technological, strategic and cultural factors that gradually brought about the entire world under European domination.

15.6 EXERCISES

- 1) How were the technological advancement and innovation in warfare strategies responsible for the European conquests overseas?
- 2) In what ways did the Europeans adopt different strategies for demographic changes across the globe?

