1865
-A select committee from the house of commons whose job was to examine Britain's colonial commitments.
- They decided they wanted to keep Sierra Leone (naval base) and get rid of the rest of Africa and give back its independence.
- They thought Africans should prepare for self-government, and the British were going to help them decide how to run themselves.
- The main reason they wanted to leave was that they weren’t getting any economic benefit for Britain. After all the main profit in Africa for the British came from slavery but slavery had now been abolished.
- The new main export from West Africa was palm oil for soap and as an industrial lubricant.

By 1905 they owned most of West Africa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1865 (tiny colonies)</th>
<th>1905</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone (250 miles)</td>
<td>Sierra Leone (now 27000 miles)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lagos (port)</td>
<td>Nigeria (2nd largest state in Africa)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gold Coast (Fanti protectorate)</td>
<td>All of modern Ghana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>only one that stayed the same due to being surrounded by French.</td>
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Why was there such a desire from Britain to get out of Africa in 1865 and why in 1905 did she own most of west Africa, what caused this dramatic change?

West Africa - Trade, it was the prime factor.
- stopping Germans and French.

- 1807- Abolition of slave trade which was later replaced by trade for palm oil.
- 1820- Slave trade made illegal (does not mean it was not continued illegally)
Oil from Africa → Britain

Textiles/machinery/guns/firearms from Britain → Africa

Also British sold old weapons to Africa improving their arms and technology.

Up to 1870 West Africa was opened up by traders and businessmen. They would hire soldiers to protect them, build forts (military bases) in order to protect their trade, which is why they had trading posts along the Gambia river and the mouth of the Niger river.

Trading posts- not government control but private individual enterprises, later the government took on the administration of the British trading posts, but even then it was not formal control even though they supported it and saw it as good business.

The first genuine threat to British trade in West Africa, came from Africans themselves, from the Ashanti Federation, an African tribe. (Gold Coast – Modern Ghana)

The Ashanti were incredibly rich and powerful from the slave trade and therefore resented the British as it was the British that had banned the slave trade.

The British had done most of their deals with another tribe called the Fanti (dominant in coastal areas)

Often the Ashanti would harass the British and the Fanti.

1863- A war between the Ashanti tribe and the Fanti tribe (who were backed by the British), which led to the recommendation in 1865 to let go of the rest of west Africa by the select committee.

1873- Second fight against Ashanti resulting in the British creating a colony in that area, whereas before it was simply a Fanti protectorate for their trade.

British won both Ashanti wars in 1863 where they held the Ashanti off and in 1873 where they turned Fanti protectorate into a colony.

In the 1850’s the French began to expand their colony of Senegal until it almost swallowed the old British colony of Gambia. (there were very few British colonies in that area at the time)

- Gambia was of no real importance to Britain until France started showing interest in Gambia. It wasn’t that the British wanted it it’s just they didn’t want anyone else to have it. Also a lot of pressure from merchants (Gambia lobby) as well as public opinion (can’t givr in to the French).

- The French were ‘obsessed’ with adding Gambia to their colony of Senegal, as they believed control of the river was an important trade.

At first Britain and France discussed a ‘swap’, make a deal. So in 1865 they discussed it seriously of swapping Gambia to get out of West Africa and in turn get something in East Africa. However there was lots of opposition in Britain and there was even a Gambia lobby to keep Gambia in the British
empire by businessmen who had invested in west Africa and by missionaries who didn’t want French rule over Gambia as they would turn local Africans into Catholics.

Even as late as 1904 (League of Nations) it was still discussed—but never happened.

1870- Two new factors had a massive effect British attitude towards West Africa:

- French became more and more involved commercially
- A group of merchants from Liverpool, known as Liverpudlians started to put pressure on the British government. Their job was to buy the oil from African ports and then sell it back in the UK, this made them the middle men, and this was not as profitable as it would be if they controlled the whole process. They believed that it would be more profitable to deal straight with the primary producer and production and cut out the process of buying from African ports.

The main mover of the liverpudlians was George Taubman Goldie he represented the Liverpool merchants. Goldie represented the move by the Liverpudlians to try and deal directly with the producers of palm oil.

Goldie was an accomplished character, he had shares in businesses, and he was member of the Royal Engineers and a trained soldier.

- Goldie decided to go up the Niger River to find out what the situation was. So in 1879 Goldie managed to get a bunch of investors from different companies and persuaded them to unite together to create the United African Company, later known as the National African Company.
- Goldie was rather persuasive and was chairman of the company. He managed to get the president of the Royal Geographical Society, Lord Aberdare. This was a big deal because Aberdare was an ex-politician and was therefore well connected with politicians and Gladstone.
- He also got the support of from James Hutton which was important as he was president of the Manchester chamber of commerce which was very influential in African politics. He was an ex-soldier and inherited shares in African companies.

Goldie’s vision was to make the company very influential by taking over the Niger River and to do this he needed Aberdare for political reasons and Hutton for business reasons.

*There used to be a royal chartered company – this is where the British government and monarchs gave a company an exclusive power over certain land and the government backed monopolies.
1881- The government gave royal charter status to the North Borneo Company (the first in 30 years). Goldie saw this and wanted the same for his company. He sat down and studied the law and all the previous times companies were give royal charter status. He wanted to get royal charter status in order to get support. He started to try to lobby the government to give royal charter status to the national African company.

- By changing the name from united African company to national African company, they made it sound like it was for all the people of Britain rather than just businessmen.
- Goldie would never have stood a chance with the government if French hadn’t suddenly increased activity/influence in this area.

The French

1880

- Saw a lot of French empire building of Indo-China

- There was a French plan to link Algeria, Senegal and upper Nigeria with a railway. This would lead to the palm oil being transported by rail instead of the Niger River therefore they could bypass Britain and they wouldn’t need to pay customs to Britain (who controlled the lower part of the Niger). Therefore the French would go from Senegal to Upper Nigeria and then to Algeria and there would be no need to go down the lower Niger which was under British control.

  • Merchants and traders were upset about railway as the French would trade with upper Nigeria and thus lead to no need of lower Nigeria. The French would get more control over upper Nigeria and get cheaper oil, better deals and make more profit.

  • Britain was more worried about an area near Sierra Leone called the southern rivers, which the British felt was the sphere of influence and the French were interested in it for trade. The French had an old French area there called port Nono, the French tried to get it going again they made agreements and deals with locals.

  • French started messing with Africa in order to get revenge for Egypt. This angered Britain so she kept Egypt for herself and refused the French to join them.

  • Egypt was a turning point which led France to take revenge and Britain reacted to that by getting defensive

  • Lots of people believe that Egypt was the catalyst, however it had already started before 1882.

  • The French would either challenge and harass the British or set their own sphere of influence in a profitable area in order to set their own trade borders.

  • Robinson and Gallagher felt that France did this to annoy Britain
The French Equatorial Company was a French company just like Goldie's company. The French started to do the same thing and started getting more and more involved in Nigeria. There was a French army officer who got leave from army to run company in Nigeria, his name was Mattie. He was given a consular appointment (i.e. official role) which meant that the British thought the French government was paying for Mattie's commercial activities.(supporting French business with government money etc)

At the time there was French naval activity off the coast which was becoming worrying and stressful. Goldie however realised that there was no need to fight and that the best move would not be to challenge the French but to buy out the French company. They undercut the French in order to assure that the French company would be unprofitable and in 1884 the French sold off their companies.

British response by now was still the old fashioned way- no fighting and just beating them in business. British government did not respond they were still not interested in West Africa and believed the best thing to do would be to leave the countries to deal with it themselves. Of course they were interested (people even said the government funded Goldie's company and helped undercut the French).

To be formally involved would be too expensive and too much of a hassle it was much easier to rule informally.

It wasn’t the French that got Britain involved but they played a significant role.

It was Belgium and Germany that kicked off British involvement.

The Congo

Before 1880's the Portuguese had a claim to the Congo but Britain refused to recognise it. Britain didn’t like the Portuguese involvement in the slave trade and looked down on them.

In the early 1880s’ everything changed with the entrance of king Leopold II of Belgium who dreamed of a personal empire in Africa. Particularly interested in report by Stanley (about how pathetic Africans were) and about how wonderful the Congo was. Britain on the other hand ignored these reports but Leo acted, he got geographers, soldiers and by the late 1870's he was the president of the African International Association which was for the suppression of the slave trade and the opening up of central Africa.

The Belgium parliament wasn’t interested as it saw this as a waste of money so they set up the African international association.

Prince Edward (UK) was the chairman it was a scientific and humanitarian mission
1884

The British government got first report that things weren’t so noble in the Congo and were suspicious that this was not a humanitarian mission.

Historians argued that Leo’s actions like the treaties the African international association made with African chiefs started the scramble for Africa. They were commercial agreements with the Association, but Leo acted as if he had full and total control!

The company remained but Leopold II was now chief of the Congo.

Three themes:

- This was a threat to British trade in the area
- Desire to stop Germany in particular picking up quality areas
- Business trading palm oil

1880- French merchants sent an expedition into the Congo led by de Brazza and negotiated a bunch of treaties with the chiefs (Mokoko). The French government thought they were ridiculous illegal pieces of rubbish.

France didn’t want to upset Britain too much as they wanted to maintain their relationship with Britain.

1882- French Government accepted the treaties because of French public opinion (and Egypt??)

The British were worried that the French getting involved in West Africa- this led to a split btwn Britain and France which was a big step towards the Berlin conference in December 1884.

Britain wanted to prevent France from coming into the Congo and taking areas because this would threaten British possessions Egypt this therefore pushed Britain to make an agreement with the Portuguese.

1884- Anglo-Portuguese treaty

Britain recognised Portuguese right to control the mouth of the Congo which enraged the British merchants.

Portuguese believed in protectionism because their economy was weak while Britain believed in free trade because of strong economy.
Other countries were outraged; the British government didn’t actually finish the treaty because Otto Von Bismarck entered. He turned up and realises Britain and France are having trouble.

Bismarck created a Franco-German entente in 1884 (still issues from Franco Prussian war 1870)

Even America came to discuss ...everybody was there

Britain was happy with the Conference as they didn’t want to give Portuguese much power (they had only been trying to upset French ambitions) and Britain stopped French dominance in West Africa.

**Congo**- decided on freedom of navigation (Bismarck hoped for the same)

- Freedom of commerce-British loved this thought good to secure her area in the Niger
- Congo would be a neutral area in times of war

**Niger.** Britain was ‘the power’ in the Niger basin all they had to give in return was free navigation to anyone.

‘recognition that they were the bosses of the river’

**effective occupation**

Anyone decides they want a bit of land they have to ask everyone to claim it

This basically means that whenever a country decides they wanted to take formal control, they had to be in effective occupation of the area and then they can announce to anyone else that they had taken occupation of the area -countries could complain

-NO PROBLEM!

This was a catalyst for everything, for the scramble for Africa...

**No More Informal Control**- no longer good enough as another country could get effective control so everyone started panicking.

Immediate response, all merchants and businessmen started putting pressure on the government.

The British government did not want formal control

The government said ok will help you but as long as you pay for it, but even when businesses refused to pay, ‘to keep France back was a national necessity’ so Gov did help.

Eventually in June 1885 Goldie’s company National African Company announced in a newspaper that Nigeria was now under British control. The British government had to protect and support the African international association, so gave the NAC a new name the **Royal Niger Company**, they have the right to be the Niger protectorate.
Conclusion

From that point onwards the way things happened in Nigeria went on everywhere.

Defensive panic, everywhere grabbing what they could as fast as possible.

Robinson and Gallagher argued that Egypt was the catalyst and West Africa was the response by the French, which led to Britain and France getting involved.

A crucial strategic point was that Egypt was different from this because of the Suez Canal, different relationships with Britain economically, financially and strategically important.

West Africa was more about money and trade. The scramble began:

Leopold getting involved

Bismarck messing with the British

Diplomatic issues

But the major catalyst was business and traders pressuring the government, Perception of government of need to protect this trade. British exports to West Africa had increased by 250% between 1860 and 1885, so there was value.

Also...

Element of defence, defensive policy- desperate to prevent protected tariffs. In West Africa they wanted free trade because Britain was the dominant trade nation in the world.

1870’s-1880’s New Threats to British Power & Prestige

USA had recovered from the civil war (1860)

Germans newly in the scene

Even the French were recovering after the Franco-Prussian war.

At the same time the world economic depression lasted 1873-1896. GB as the dominant economy suffered more than others because so much reliance on trade One way to get out of the depression was to trade with colonies.

Britain had the strongest economy, and the living standards of the British people was challenged by competition from new threats and economic depression.