

HANDOUT 2.2.1 GERMAN COLONIALISM TIMELINE

- During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Herero, an ethnic group, migrated to what is today Namibia from the east and established themselves as herders.
- In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the ethnic group of Nama from South Africa arrived in present-day Namibia.
- In 1884, Germany acquired several territories in Africa: German East Africa, German South West Africa, German Cameroon, and Togoland.
- German settlers were drawn to the colony by economic opportunity in diamond and copper mining, as well as farming. In 1902, the colony had 200,000 inhabitants, of which 2,595 were German.
- In January 1904, conflicts between the colonists and the Herero herders began. There were frequent disputes about access to water and land, and legal discrimination against the native population by the colonists.
- By mid-1904, the tension in the colony had peaked. Led by Chief Samuel Maherero, the Herero and Nama began a large rebellion against the colonists. This resulted in a conflict between the Herero and the German colonists that lasted until 1907.
- In August 1904, the Waterberg Battle, the most decisive battle of the conflict, took place, resulting in the defeat of the Herero.
- In October 1904, during the aftermath of the Waterberg Battle, German General Lothar von Trotha issued orders to kill every male Herero and drive the women and children into the desert.
- At the end of 1904, prisoners were forced into concentration camps, where most of them died from abuse, disease, and starvation.
- The last and one of the most brutal concentration camps, Shark Island, was closed in early 1907.
- Germany's colonial period ended in 1919 with the Treaty of Versailles following World War I, when its territories were confiscated and distributed to the victors.
- It is estimated that about 75 percent of the Herero population at the time died at the hands of the German colonists. About 65,000 of 80,000 Herero and at least 10,000 Nama were killed.
- In 1985, the United Nations classified Germany's handling of the rebellion as an attempt to exterminate the Herero and Nama peoples of South West Africa, and therefore one of the earliest attempts of genocide in the twentieth century.
- In 2004, Germany's development aid minister, Heidemarie Wiczeorek-Zeul, offered an apology acknowledging German culpability for the war.
- In 2004, Germany started a special initiative to improve living conditions among the ethnic groups most affected by Germany's crimes committed in the past.
- In 2015, Germany and Namibia initiated a dialogue on coming to terms with the past.
- In February 2019, the Bible and whip belonging to the Namibian national hero Hendrik Witbooi, which had been seized by German troops during the colonial period, was returned.
- In May 2019, the Stone Cross of Cape Cross, a former territorial marker erected in 1486 was returned.
- In May 2021, the German government made a formal state apology acknowledging the murder of the Herero and Nama peoples as genocide. Germany plans to support Namibia and the descendants of the victims with a 1.1 billion euro "rebuilding and development" program for reparations.