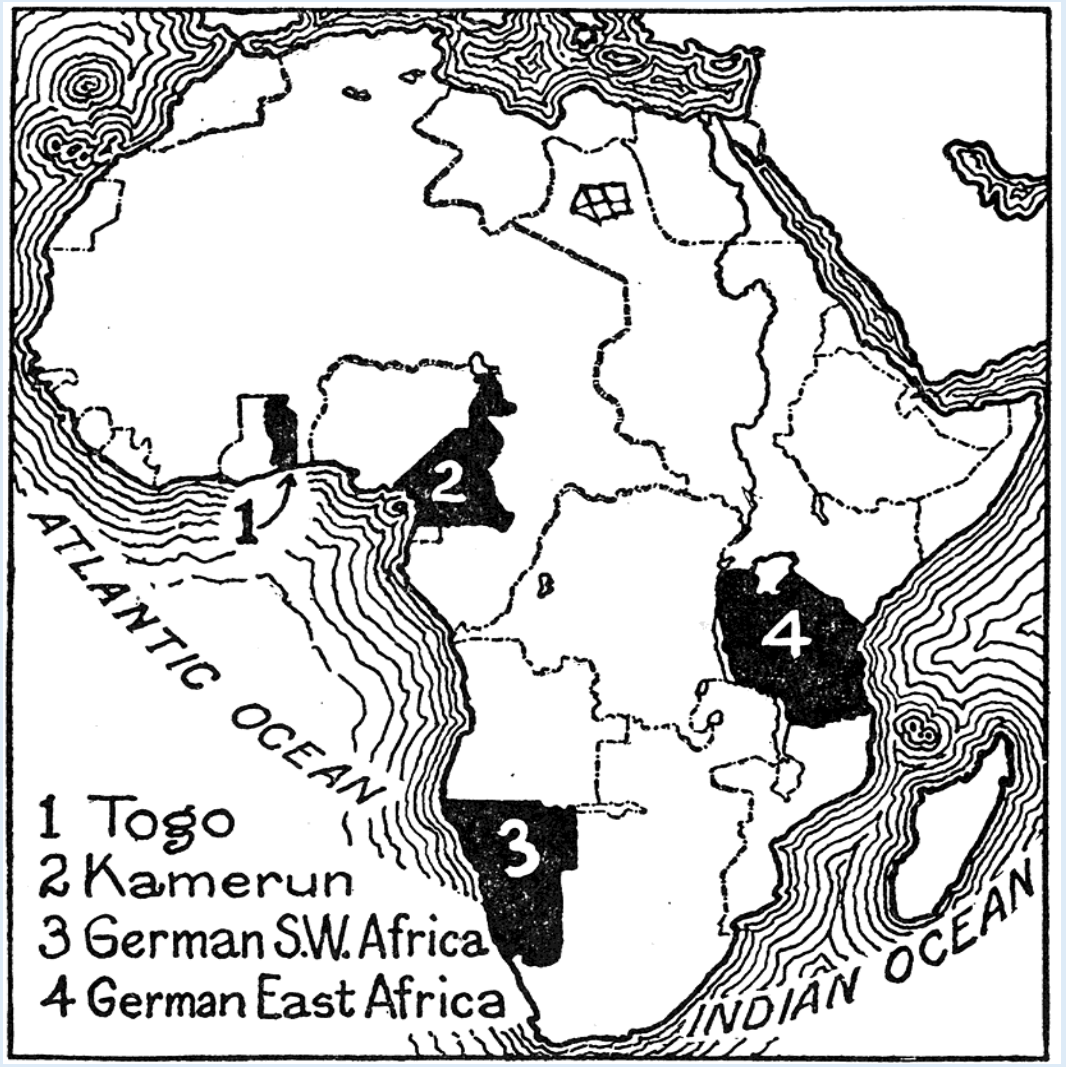
Historical Responsibility

German Colonialism

- The German colonial empire began in 1884 and ended in 1919.
- German colonies were German Togoland (now part of Ghana and Togo), Cameroon, German South-West Africa (now Namibia), and German East Africa (now Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania).
- The descendants of white German settlers who colonized Herero and Nama land are still in Namibia and continue to own 70% of the most productive agricultural land in Namibia.



World War I: African Colonies Lost by Germany
Projection: Unknown
Source Bounding Coordinates:
W: E: N: S:
https://etc.usf.edu/maps/pages/11700/11761/11761.htm

- Teaching about German colonial history is not mandatory in schools in Germany.
- Throughout Germany, there is a significant lack of memorials to the crimes commited in the colonies.
- Colonial crimes were committed in Africa, which makes it easier to avoid the history and consequences in Germany.
- Businesses and cities like Bremen and Hamburg made enormous financial gains from the colonies.

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Berlin’s African Quarter

- Located in the Wedding neighborhood.
- Prior to World War I, a zoo, including a human zoo, were planned for the area.
- Many streets refer to places in former German colonies in Africa
- Others are named for Germans involved in ruthless crimes of colonialism (e.g., Petersallee was named after Carl Peters).

© DW https://www.dw.com/en/berlins-african-quarter-to-change-colonial-era-street-names/a-43474130

Statement 1:

Should street names in Berlin's African Quarter be renamed?

Ethnological Collections

- In 1897, British troops looted and stole countless artifacts from the Kingdom of Benin (present day Nigeria).
- These priceless artifacts were auctioned off across Europe and the United States.
- Among them were the Benin Bronzes, which were purchased from Germany.
- The Benin Bronzes are a collection of over 500 artifacts, such as plaques and sculptures mostly made of bronze.
- In 2021, Germany reached an agreement with Nigeria to return a share of the plundered artifacts.
- Some other plundered artifacts and human remains are still in Germany.

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https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/de/Benin_brass_plaque_03.jpg

Statement 2:

Should Germany return the Benin Bronze and other plundered artifacts?

Reparations

- The government of Namibia, as well as the Herero and Nama, are seeking reparations from Germany for land stolen and lives lost.
- A significant amount of the most arable land in Namibia is still owned by descendants of the German colonists.
- In May 2021, Germany officially recognized that it committed genocide during its colonial occupation of Namibia.
- The German government plans to support Namibia and the descendants of the victims with a 1.1 billion euro “rebuilding and development” program.
- However, Germany holds that no legal claims for compensation can be made retroactively and its liability is political and moral rather than legal.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Namibia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Germany

Statement 3:

Should Germany allow retroactive legal claims to the people of Namibia for the genocide of the Herero and Nama peoples?

The German colonization in Africa and the genocide of the Herero and Nama happened nearly 140 years ago.

- Some things to think about:
  - *Are future generations responsible for what their ancestors have done?*
  - *Do we have a responsibility toward the victims of past injustices?*
  - *Given that we cannot undo injustices, should we at least compensate the victims of our ancestors?*