

Imperialism in the century assignment



**ASSIGN
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There was a great deal of Imperialism in the 19th century, led by mostly westerners from Europe. Imperialism is the act in which one nation extends its rule over another. Imperialism had a substantial effect on the 19th century throughout the entire world by bringing upon changes to many different countries, for better and for worse, especially to Africa. Prior to the nineteenth century, westerners did interfere with many of the affairs of nations outside of their borders, so signs of Imperialism are shown many times throughout history. Examples of this would be the European colonies in the Americas and also influence in Asia.

Whenever a western country was involved with the economy of an outside country, there were many reasons for Imperialism, two of which were economical and political. What better way to boost an economy than to open markets in other areas of the world? The colonized nations had abundant supplies of resources that could not be found in Europe, which is what first attracted the westerners. Because of imperialism, not only did Europeans have access to resources in Africa and Asia, but they also had access to cheap labor by forcing the natives of the lands to work for little or no money.

The desire of power and security for the military were also causes for Imperialism. By having control over distant lands, it would be a benefit, militarily, to have bases spread out around the world, especially during times of war. (Wakefield, Edward Gibbon A Letter from Sydney and Other Writings on Colonization) Racism on account of Social Darwinism was another major factor contributing to Imperialism. Social Darwinism ("survival of the fittest") led to the Europeans' belief that they were of a higher race and it was their

duty to go into other areas and improve the lives of the people who inhabited those lands.

Improving lives meant spreading western religion (Christianity) culture, and influence. The following quote from *The Backward Peoples and Our Relations with Them* by Sir Harry H. Johnston shows an example of how westerners thought: "... Let us proceed to define who and what these backward or unprepossessing peoples are and to what extent they may be considered to be retrograde and ineffective as compared with the dominating white race. " There were many other examples of writing, such as *The White Man's Burden* by Rudyard

Kipling, which supported the belief of white men being of some supremacy and of the white man's need to colonize. Nationalism also played a role in support of racism by allowing people to become extremely confident in their nationality and in turn, creating a form of the feeling of superiority. (Johnson, Sir Harry H. *The Backward People and Our Relations with Them*) There was a lot of competition between the different European states economically and politically. Imperialism made this competition worse by creating another factor to contend over.

Obviously a nation with many colonies throughout the world would begin to take over foreign lands, it would only be natural for many others to follow the example as to not be left behind in the competition and for their own economic wealth. This occurred during the scramble for Africa, wherein European nations raced to gain control over different areas in Africa. During the mid nineteenth century, Europeans were beginning to colonize along the

coast of Africa, but couldn't go much further because disease would spread, quickly killing of much of the European settlers.

Since at the time Europe was going through the Industrial Revolution, there were many advances not only made technologically, but also in the field of science and medicine. With new technology, goods could be mass produced in factories and so a surplus of goods was often an occurrence. Europeans turned to Africa for new markets as to make money off of their surpluses and Africa also was rich in natural resources to fuel Europe's many growing industries. Since new medicines had been discovered, Europeans could move further into Africa and stay for longer periods of time.

In addition to advances in medicine and in industry, new weapons were developed, which could easily defeat those of the Africans. This allowed for larger European settlements to be set up in Africa and hence, the race for territories began. Another reason for the scramble for Africa was the fear of upsetting the balance of power. Every European nation was concerned about their rivals becoming more powerful than they were. The main nations involved were Britain, France, Germany, and Italy. During the late nineteenth century, all of these countries, and a few others, fell into a "scramble" to claim territories in Africa. (Mastodon, Michael "Imperialism") The scramble for Africa began with an attempt by King Leopold II of Belgium wanting to gain control of the area of the Congo Basin. Tensions arose between the British and the French, because of the British gaining more control over Egypt, which was the country they had once had joint control over the finances of. France was also competing with Italy in northern Africa, so

tensions were strong everywhere. Germany felt pressured by the other European nations who were gaining control over territories in Africa.

Bismarck, who happened to be ruler at the time, declared control over three territories in eastern and western Africa, which caused even more strain between European nations. Since the control for African territories arose very quickly, the Berlin Conference was set up to discuss the policies of claiming lands in Africa to avoid any more bitter rivalries. (“The Scramble for Africa” The Economist) Fourteen European countries and the United States were in attendance at the Berlin Conference that took place between 1884 and 1885.

Boundaries were determined and also rules for trade and for future conquest within Africa. Of the countries present at the conference, only half of them had their own colonies in Africa and none of the represented nations were the nations colonized or any other African nation. What basically came out of the Berlin Conference was the Berlin Act, which set other things. When it came to the rules of further domination in Africa, each country had to inform the other countries whenever they took over an African territory and had their decision to colonize had to be based on “effective occupation”.

Freedom of trade was declared with all nations and also, it was agreed that slavery and the slave trade would be suppressed. (Mastodon, Michael “Imperialism”) Imperialism affected colonized nations in many ways especially economically, politically, and culturally. There were often many positive and negative effects of imperialism on the colonies that were taken over. The culture and religion of the colonized people was often condemned to try to

have the people move in the way of the westerners. In Africa, economically, Africans made very little profit off of the goods they produced.

All of the capital went to the Europeans. Also, before colonization, Africans traded within the continent, but this practice was ended once the westerners became involved in their affairs. So if anything, the colonial period, was one of economic corruption, rather than economic development. (Peahen, A. Dad, De. General History of Africa (Abridged Edition): VII Africa under Colonial Domination 1880-1935) Colonization in Africa led to an overall increase of the African population, which could be thought of as a positive social affect.

The quality of life was improved in terms of here being hospitals, a sewage system, and sanitary facilities and there was also an increase in employment opportunities. Western inventions such as the steam engine and other machinery were introduced to Africa. Christianity and Islam were spread and so was western education. Colonialism caused a change in the social structure of Africans was it allowed manipulation between the classes. Social class was not determined by birth, but by a person's success individually. (Peahen, A. Dad, De. General History of Africa (Abridged Edition): VII Africa under Colonial Domination

Behind all of the positive social effects, there were many negative ones. A larger division was created between those who dwelt in urban areas and those in rural areas. Western education had made the barrier between these people larger. Colonization allowed for the rich, white Europeans to take over all of the good and fertile lands and also allowed them to monopolize in trade

in Africa. Even though there were educational institutions set up, they were inadequately spread out and didn't have much of an effect on Africa as a whole. There were still very large illiteracy levels.

Also, there was no emphasis made on technical or industrial education, which would've been more useful. Racism was stressed during imperialism in Africa and created a sense of inferiority for the people who inhabited the continent at the time. (Peahen, A. Dad, De. General History of Africa (Abridged Edition): VII Africa under Colonial Domination 1880-1935)

Politically, colonialism in Africa created a larger degree of continuous peace and stability than there ever was before. There were now definite boundaries in Africa, nationalism that spread throughout the continent. On the other hand, a lot of the lattice changes were negative.

Because of boundaries set up by the westerners, many ethnic and religious groups were torn apart, which affected the lives of the natives on a personal level and created many disputes. The boundaries also did not ensure that natural resources were distributed evenly, which would serve as a problem since the economy of Africans was dependent on what they could gather from their land. Africans lost their independence and were basically ruled by the white colonial leaders, who also owned almost all of their property. For a long time, the people of Africa had lost their right of liberty.