

Joseph chamberlain: the father of imperialism essay sample

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Joseph Chamberlain can be rightly termed as the father of imperialism. Imperialism was the policy of acting as a nation's authority figure or leader, and by the establishment of economic and political hegemony over other nations. (<http://www.infoplease.com>) Joseph Chamberlain promoted British imperialism with full vigor; in his eyes, England was destined to control the whole world. Joseph Chamberlain was born in 1836, and at the age of 38 was elected as the lord mayor of Birmingham. He pushed for reform in the clearance of the slums and the takeover of the city's gas and electric services. He was acknowledged as a British statesman, known to some as a champion of imperialism in foreign affairs and of social reform in domestic matters. Although he was somewhat primarily responsible for the Boer war, his main focus was to create a prosperous England. He was the man behind the rise and fall of the British Empire. "The day of small nations has long passed away. The day of Empires has come." (Hopkins 22)

Chamberlain was the leader of British imperialism in the 1890's. His developmental policy of imperial expansion and consolidation was influenced by the same factors that influenced the general movement towards imperialism during those times. (<http://en.thinkexist.com>) As this period of British imperialism ran parallel to similar movements of expansion in France, Russia and Germany, it is perhaps natural to assume that factors influencing the one may have also influenced the others. This also leads to a possibility that factors influencing old imperialism and modern day imperialism are intricately linked, if not the same. If there is a continuity of the factors influencing imperial developments in various periods of history, then this

essay strives to link those factors together, endeavoring to explain the basis of modern day imperialism.

Chamberlain's relentless campaign for imperialism compelled others to change their definitions about the conceptions of the Empire, and made them follow the Empire's advances more closely than ever before.

Chamberlain asked the English to embrace imperialism, instilling a feeling of pride in them for mother England. He upheld England as superior than other nations and thus believed, it was their right to rule over them. He was well respected by his fellow politicians, for Winston Churchill called him " a splendid piebald: first black, then white; or in political terms, first fiery red, then true blue". ([http://www. reference. com](http://www.reference.com)) He was the perpetrator of Britain's tough, shrewd and successful policy of first overwhelming foreign lands with British settlers, and finally forcefully taking over the land after becoming fully acquainted with the natives and their ways. " You cannot destroy the practices of barbarism, of slavery, of superstition, which for centuries have desolated the interior of Africa, without the use of force." (Strauss 3) Therefore, Chamberlain was the one who pushed for England to annex overseas countries to make them their own colonies. He was, in true terms, a relentless promoter of British imperialism.

Imperialism has always been associated with great pain and suffering that the mother country brings upon its colonies abroad. However, it is usually forgotten that imperialism had its positive factors too. It is, without any doubt, certain that imperialism ravaged the colonies politically, economically and culturally. However, the pain suffered by these colonies was equaled

with the great infrastructure, architecture and administration that the imperialist nations brought along with them. The British are credited with introducing break-through technology as the rail, the telegraph system etc. to their colonies. With the onset of the British as rulers, the number of deaths occurring in these colonies declined dramatically and the overall general health and life standards of the natives increased substantially. This was a direct result of better hygiene practice and more importantly, advanced medical technology.

Before the arrival of the imperialist England as a ruler, most Asian and African countries were ravaged by frequent battles between small kingdoms. The onset of England as their ruler unified these small kingdoms as one country. The British ruled over these kingdoms cohesively as one big administrative power. This manner of administration worked extremely well, with the success of imperialism serving as a proof for this method's effectiveness. However, this integration of different kingdoms led to one of the biggest downsides of the British imperialism. This practice disturbed the state of equilibrium between different ethnic groups by redefining their territories, thereby laying the seeds for future civil wars. Nevertheless, this does not deny the positive effect the British had on their colonies, which the other imperialist nations might not have had. In all, the British gave their colonies the most extensive railways, irrigation and telegraph networks in the world, advanced healthcare, the best legal system, the most efficient civil service, the English language ... the list is endless. (<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/people/A0811257.html>)

It is ironic that Joseph Chamberlain, the man who was at the forefront of the rise of imperialism, would play a part in causing its decline. With the arrival of other European powers and America on the scene, Chamberlain had realized that the British Empire was in decline, partly due to its slow growth rate and partly due to the comparative giants leaps taken by other industrial nations like America and Germany. Chamberlain realized it was high time that something needed to be done in order for Britain to maintain its status as a superpower. It is at this point that Chamberlain took a disastrous step. He was brilliant in diagnosing the problem, but was not farsighted in seeing the results of his proposed solutions. He proposed a common tariff for all colonies and dominions – a signal of imperial unity, which seemed impossible at that moment.

Colonies like Canada, South Africa etc, who themselves were emerging industrial nations, did not want to accept a system where they would have to sell raw materials at a lower price to the mother nation and then buy finished goods from the mother country at a relatively higher price. They viewed this policy as equivalent of a mother robbing her daughters for its own profit. However, as the British went ahead with this policy, this agitated the colonies. They now wanted to break free of the British stronghold as they realized that the British rule was now hindering their own development. These colonies now started pushing for independence. Colonies like Canada eventually got their independence from the British. This set a precedent for other colonies, oppressed under the British rule, to push for independence, sparking the decline of the British Empire.

Whatever our views on imperialism might be, we still cannot undermine Joseph Chamberlain's part in the spread of imperialism and ironically, its decline too. Joseph Chamberlain had anticipated that British imperialism would help civilize the uncivilized, developing countries. However, he was wrong. Though British imperialism did have some positive effects, it largely contributed negatively to the colonies. Their policies and tactics not only affected the native country at that time, but it has had long-term repercussions too. Their integration of culturally and religiously different groups of people laid the ground for future civil wars and international conflicts. (Hopkins 24) In conclusion, most of the modern political problems, such as the Kashmir dispute are consequences of our colonial past and British imperialism.

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