

Two views of imperialism in the twentieth century history essay



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There were two countries that had a common link to imperialism. One was the country of India in 1907 and the other was the country of Uganda in 1923. These two countries had two separate responses to European imperialism. These two responses were written by two authors which had vastly different viewpoints on how imperialism was perceived throughout world history. These two viewpoints would later change the way society viewed imperialism.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak, born in 1856 and died in 1920 was an Indian nationalist leader. He was educated in India and in London and admitted to the English bar in 1889. He practiced law unsuccessfully in India for two years. He was a journalist who utilized the newspapers to set forth his nationalist ideals. Bal Tilak was one of the most popular leaders of the early nationalist movement. He demanded self rule and was known as a man of action. The British feared him and described him as one of the most dangerous pioneers of disaffection and truly the father of Indian unrest. Bal Tilak used the belief system of the gurus M K Gandhi and Veer Savarkar.

Lord Lugard was the one of the most important British colonial officials and a high commissioner for northern Nigeria. He later became the governor-general of Nigeria. In 1914, Lord Frederick Lugard, the governor of Britain's territories in Nigeria, united the states in northern and southern Nigeria into a single colony. He worked in the administration of these two colonies and eventually formed the country of Nigeria. It was his work in these territories which led him to develop his theory of indirect rule. This fashion of rule, which emphasized working through native leaders and utilizing native social

structures, became the official policy of British imperialism throughout the empire during the 1920s.

There were also several similarities between the two authors and the country which they supported. One was that they both dealt with imperialism. The idea of imperialism is to rule over a people or a place through colonization, military power, economic or political power. It also is defined as the creation and maintenance of an unequal economic, cultural, and territorial relationship, usually between states and often in the form of an empire based on domination and subordination. The word imperialism comes from the term empire. Imperialism refers to the practice of domination of one country by another in order to expand territory, power and influence. It usually carries with it the idea of cultural superiority on the part of the imperialist, judging the way of life, traditions and beliefs of those colonized as inferior and worthy of replacement:

Another similarity between the two documents is that both of these documents concerned nationalism. Nationalism was the common link between the two documents and their associated country, since both Lugard and Tilak envisioned a Nationalist society. They wanted Nationalism because it is a belief that creates and sustains a nation as a concept of a common identity for a group of humans. According to the theory of nationalism, it is the preservation of identity features and the independence of all people from the country are a common fundamental value.

Naturally, where there are similarities there are also differences. These are some of the points in which the viewpoints of Lord Lugard are different than

that of Bal Tilak. One difference is that the document written by Bal Tilak about India concerns the Indian National Congress. This was an Indian political party founded in 1885 and created by a group of English-speaking urban intellectuals. Its founding members proposed economic reforms and wanted a larger role in the making of British policy for India. It was founded in order that educated Indians might gain something of a voice in the governance of their own country. By 1907, however, the Congress had split into a moderate group which sought dominion status for India, and a radical militant group led by Bal Tilak which proposed a system of self-rule. The Indian National Congress would be good for India once British rule was replaced by indirect rule.

Another difference is the idea of indirect rule. The system of indirect rule, which Lord Lugard supported meant that it was the understanding of the British colonial method to rule through and by the natives. Although, they also had to submit to a higher authority, which in this case was Britain. He advocated that an indirect rule system had three major institutions. One was the native authority made up of the local ruler, the colonial official, and the administrative staff. The next was the native treasury which collected revenues to pay for the local administrative staff and services. The last was the native courts which supposedly applied native laws and customs. The supposedly traditional legal system of the colonized that was used by the courts to adjudicate cases. People in Africa previously had diverse types of government ranging from highly centralized states to stateless societies. As a result, indirect rule increased divisions between ethnic groups and gave power to certain men of higher authority that never had it before.

This system operated with the association of already established political leaderships and institutions. The theory and practice of indirect rule is commonly associated with the emirates of northern Nigeria. The emirates had an established and functional administrative system and Lord Lugard simply adapted it to his own way of thinking. This was cheap and convenient. The attempts to portray the use of indirect rule as an expression of British administrative genius did not work. It was a realistic and frugal choice based partly on using existing functional institutions. This choice was also partially structured upon Britain's unwillingness to provide the resources required to manage its vast empire. Instead, it developed the stubborn view that the colonized should pay for their own colonial control. Therefore, Britain gave the colonized the choice of indirect rule. In this dispersed society, the system of indirect rule did not work very well because there was no single ruler. The British colonizers who were unfamiliar with these new and unique political systems insisted that African natives should have chiefs. Imperialist ambitions in Africa were boosted by the expansion of competitive trade in Europe. The main aim was to secure commercial and trade links with African colonies and protect those links from other European competitors. Europe established trade relations with certain African colonies and promoted trade with these countries. European traders were at first not interested in expanding into the interior of Africa. As long as African rulers assured them of a supply of slaves from the interior, they felt no need to expand into the interior. The rapid expansion of industries made European countries look to Africa for a supply of cheap raw materials and slave labor.

These two different responses to British imperialism may tell the reader more information about the colonizer. A colonizer is the people or persons that establishes a colony in another country or place. Africans resisted colonial rule from the outset but were not strong enough to defend themselves against European conquest. As a result, most of Africa was colonized. Only Ethiopia and Liberia remained free. Colonization was resisted as the local people tried to hold on to their land and freedom. In most cases this was unsuccessful. The responses may also tell the reader more about the colonized people. To be colonized means to migrate to and settle in order to establish a colony or territory under the immediate political control of a state.

Bal Tilak spoke powerfully and accurately of India and summarized the feelings of the new and increasingly militant national movement. He said that the British rulers ruined trade, caused the collapse of industry, and destroyed the people's courage and abilities. Under the colonial regime, Tilak asserted that the country was offered neither education, rights, or respect for public opinion. Without prosperity and contentment, the Indian people suffered constantly from poverty and famine and the decimation of health. Tilak saw only one remedy which was for the Indian people to take political power. If the people did not have this then the Indian industry could not develop and the youth could not be educated. Therefore the country could not win social reforms or material welfare for the people.

Tilak saw colonial rule as being unfavorable to India's progress, and the contradictions between the British oppressors and the Indian people as being irreconcilable.

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Later societies within certain countries were able to understand the European imperial system by learning from past mistakes. In the late 19th century India was an agricultural society. Jute, raw cotton, tea and coffee were exported to Britain. Textiles and other manufactured products were imported from Britain to India. The Indian textile industry could not compete with cheap, mass produced British goods. However in the early 20th century Indian industries began to develop. It was still mostly a farming and agricultural country but this was beginning to change. At the same time Britain was in decline. In the mid-19th century Britain was the most powerful country in the world but by the end of the century other powers such as Germany and the USA had caught up. Britain was weakened by the first world war and continued to decline in the 1920's and 1930's. As Britain declined Indian nationalist feelings grew stronger.

Indirect rule worked well in areas which had long standing centralized state systems such as chiefdoms, kingdoms, and empires along with their respective administrative and judicial systems of government. This meant that the African leaders could exercise authority at the mercy of European colonial officials. Thus the political and social restraints that tied them to their people in the old system had been broken. Some clever African leaders maneuvered and ruled as best they could. Others used the new colonial setting to become tyrants and oppressors, even though they were eventually responsible to the British officials.

Imperialism takes the form of political control and creating economic dependence. In Europe, the period where imperialism coincided with growing nationalism and unification when previously divided political units were

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united under a single monarchy. An alliance allowed for empire building because people were gathered under a monarchy that claimed the right to rule them. Examples are German and Italian unification. Towards the end of the 19th century, imperialism became a policy of colonial expansion pursued by different European powers.

The way that these two authors from separate countries defined imperialism was one of the ways that imperialism was assisted in the way it extended and became more prevalent globally after 1920. These are the ways in which these two documents have helped later societies to understand the European imperial system and the successive independence movements of the early twentieth century.

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