

Economic causes of imperialism



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During the late 19th century to the early 20th century, Western Europe sought the aim of imperialism, which is known as New Imperialism. But what is Imperialism? Imperialism is when strong nations dominate the weaker ones by political, economic or cultural life. In Europe, the countries' ambitions focused on Africa, although China and Australia were also partially occupied.

The main causes for countries to seek expansion of their territories were military and political reasons, humanitarian and religious goals, social Darwinism, Western technology and especially economic motives. The nations that started undergoing an industrial revolution, such as Britain, led to the acceleration of European Imperialism. The industries required large quantities of raw materials and in order to sell the products, they had to expand and create new markets. All of this created an increase in the competition of trade around the world.

What Imperial governments and private companies wanted was a high-profit margin, they realized that such profits could be achieved through a greater abundance of raw materials at a cheaper price. Economic expansion demanded cheap labor, trade and natural resources, such as precious metals and land. After the arrival of the industrial revolution, dependent colonies often provided to European factories and markets a steady supply for raw materials in order to manufacture products, such as oil, rubber and manganese for steel. This required that industrial nations had to maintain firm control over the unexplored areas, forced to look somewhere else as their own nations didn't have enough resources for their country. The special attraction of many countries was that they offered many raw materials

needed, which were mainly Africa and Asia, who offered cotton, silk, vegetable oils and the rarer minerals. All these products of the tropics were very welcomed to Europe, although many of them were got by trading without political control.

Colonies not only provided cheap raw materials but also new markets where industrialized countries could sell the manufactured goods which were produced at home and could not be sold domestically on the continent. Only by controlling some countries or areas, which meant establishing territories under their direct control, could the commercial economy function to all intents and purposes. The financial profits of the new imperialism were restricted because the new colonies were too impoverished to spend money on European merchandise. By 1910, Britain's manufacturing capacity reached 14.7%, while the United States had 35.5% and Germany at 14.9%.

As some countries became more profitable, they started to become more implicated in imperialism, resulting others to have some difficulties in maintaining a high amount of trade and investment overseas. Businessmen were ambitious for new destinations for selling abroad and pressured the government to secure enslaved markets in Africa. As the European market was limited, some businessmen and government leaders, concluded that overseas markets would solve problems of low prices. Many industrialists wanted to accelerate the process of colonialism securing colonies before they strictly needed them. These thoughts were that markets might be soon become oversupplied and a nation's economic survival would depend on being able to unload the extra products elsewhere.

The augment in trading opportunities also stimulated imperialist greed, European countries sought to open up new trade routes that gave them places to sell their products. However, the chase for new markets speeded up as the continuous production of new goods increased. As well as the competition of trade and other economic factors, the European nations were motivated by competition for power. The United Kingdom and France, both top imperial powers took issue over the control of India and North America and the European powers extended their influence whenever an opportunity presented itself.

The weakness of China was exploited by European powers who forced it to sign treaties opening up the country to trade. The prestige of having a great empire was also a key factor in motivating European governments and nations. For a nation to be seen powerful, it needs to have land through the world to have many military bases in those and as people felt pride for their country when it took more land, nationalism developed. In addition, many imperialist empires wanted to establish their empire because it helped them gain influence in the diplomatic field.

Sometimes certain nations Sometimes nations are in need of strategic places in other countries, so they establish their control over them. In the past, the British had control over Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus and Aden, because from strategic point of view, these areas were very important. For example, an American cartoonist in 1888 depicted John Bull, representing England, like the octopus of imperialism grabbing land on every country.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that the main reason for conquering lands during the New Imperialism was the greed for economic gain. As Mahatma Gandhi said, " There is a sufficiency in the world for man's need but not for a man's greed". Even China that had almost everything and didn't have to pass through Imperialism was pushed by his neighbours and blinded by political and economic power. The others were also fooled, making more money but hurting others such as the Africans, which were exploited.