

Discuss the economic and political motives for european expansion into africa in ...



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The economic and political motives for European expansion into Africa in the 19th Century Nineteenth Century was not the beginning of European expansion across the globe as Europe had been extending its power across continents ever since the maritime expansion and rise of capitalist economy in the 15th and 16th centuries. Portugal was the key player, according to Inikori, especially with its control of West Africa which provided slaves for the Southern plantations of America and the Caribbean sugar plantations. The slave trade that existed since the 15th century is considered to have paved way into the 19th century colonialism in Africa (James, p. 63). However, in the 19th century, European expansion was much greater and had new motives: political, economic and social. This essay discusses the economic and political motives for European expansion into Africa in the 19th century. Common excuses for the 19th century colonial expansion were the spread of civilization, education, and Christianity (Colonialism in Africa, slide 5). However, these were only pretexts. There were other economic and political reasons for this expansion, which were mostly concealed. Industrial Revolution is the classic reason given when the economic motive is explored. Industrial revolution created a sharp need for raw materials, new resources, new markets and new investment outlets for surplus capital (Colonialism in Africa, slide 6). There was interplay of various factors, such as unemployment resulting from the large scale industrialisation. Europe dealt with this problem by acquiring new colonies for the purpose of finding an alternative place for such surplus population. These settler colonies served different purposes from the non-settler colonies. The economic motives for colonial expansion are testified by the colonial economic policies that enabled exploitation of natural and human resources. Development of <https://assignbuster.com/discuss-the-economic-and-political-motives-for-european-expansion-into-africa-in-the-19th-century/>

infrastructure for easy access to and transportation of resources and education for the development and eventual exploitation of human resources are examples (Nationalism and Decolonization, slide 3).

While the economic imperatives derived from industrial revolution spurred the eventual colonization of Africa, the political impetus was equally powerful in the European expansion and it rose from inter-European competition for pre-eminence and power (Colonialism in Africa, slide 7). Colonies around the globe symbolised power and various European powers competed to acquire colonies, establish stakes and declare exclusive rights in particular territories and waterways across Africa.

The scramble for Africa was so that the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck identified the need for a treaty among the various European nations competing for power in Africa. The historically significant Berlin Conference convened by him created a treaty that led to the subsequent invasion, partition and colonization of Africa by most European powers.

Africa was soon partitioned along arbitrary boundaries that cut across tribal boundaries which led to the splitting up, falling apart and eventual collapse of several African tribes and their civilization (Colonialism in Africa 12-14).

The native tribes were not consulted in drawing the treaty as its primary aim was to facilitate expansion of colonisation in Africa without any more inter-European wars and clashes (Colonialism in Africa 7). All that the political powers of Europe had to do was to give their fellow colonizers notice prior to claiming any new territory and validate annexure based on the principle of effective occupation (Colonialism in Africa 3, 7). Establishment of the colonial state with administration structures followed partition to facilitate successful control over territories and effective exploitation of resources (Nationalism <https://assignbuster.com/discuss-the-economic-and-political-motives-for-european-expansion-into-africa-in-the-19th-century/>

and Decolonization 4). The British, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and Belgian were the major colonizers, who by the end of the 19th century had expanded their control over much of Africa, except Abyssinia, now Ethiopia and Liberia (Nationalism and Decolonization 7, 8).

All the European powers engaged in colonisation were driven largely by the same forces: the capitalist industrial revolution with its demands and surpluses along with the inter-European conflicts and wars for superiority spurred the European expansion into Africa. However, the beginning of the end was soon near as “ colonialism gave birth to the forces that overthrow it” (Nationalism and Decolonization 5).

Works Cited

Inikori, W. Joseph. “ Slave Trade in Africa and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.”

Insert the rest of the information following the example below.

James, C. L. R. “ The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery: Some Interpretations of Their Significance in the Development of the United States and the Western World.” A Turbulent Voyage: Readings in African American Studies. Ed. Floyd W. Hayes III. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. Insert year. 58-82. Print.

Insert details of name of the author/lecturer. “ Nationalism and Decolonization.” [Powerpoint]. Insert details of date and url. Check examples below.

Insert details of name of the author/lecturer. “ Colonialism in Africa.” [Powerpoint]. Insert details of date and url. Check examples below.

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