

To (1899 – 1902) lie essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Boer War had many possible origins from British self defense to capitalist driven expansion. There remain profound differences of opinion about the war's origins. Some emphasise Britain's economic interests in the Southern African periphery, principally the production and supply of gold and the consequent necessity of removing the administratively backward and economically obstructionist regime of Paul Kruger. However others have stressed the concerns of the British government decision makers at the center. These concerns include British power and prestige and the necessity of maintaining British paramountcy in South Africa and about safeguarding the strategically vital Cape Colony. Furthermore, it was not only ' British politics' in general that caused the war but also those arguments that give a more central role to key individuals such as Sir Alfred Milner or Joseph Chamberlain.

While none of these possibilities alone can explain the Boer War, it can be seen the Boer War did have multiple causes, however economic forces and the role of key individuals in shaping events can be seen as the strongest influential causes. Before discussing the causes of the war, it is necessary to understand the line of events leading up to the war. In the late seventeenth century the Dutch East India Company had set up a small trading station near the Cape of Good Hope on the southern tip of South Africa (Cape Colony). The poorest members of this deeply Protestant community were grazing farmers who searched for land at the expense of Africans. The Boers viewed themselves as a distinct and unique group of pilgrims and were hostile to both Africans and Europeans.

In 1806, the British navy claimed Cape Colony. Henceforth, the Cape of Good Hope became a crucial naval base for Britain on the trade route to India and the Far East. In 1834, the British abolished slavery. However, a group of about 5, 000 refused to accept the decision and set up two independent states, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. These ' Boer Republics' protected their Protestant identity in their constitutions and were determined to exclude Africans from voting in their elections.

By 1855 the British government had recognized the independence of these two countries. However this did not stop Anglo-Boer relations remaining tense. In 1877 Britain took control over the Transvaal and in 1881 Paul Kruger (President of the Transvaal) attacked the British in the first Boer war because they refused to restore independence to the Boer republic after the Zulu war. A Boer victory resulted in the British government deciding to restore partial independence.

This was carried out by two agreements signed in 1882 and 1884, however the treaties contained two provisos. Firstly that Britain supervised foreign policy and secondly the British retained the right to intervene in certain circumstances in domestic matters. The dispute between the Transvaal and the British government over the Uitlander issue revolved around the interpretation of the wording of the agreements that followed the first Anglo-Boer war. The immediate cause of the war revolved around an argument between Britain and the Transvaal over voting rights for European immigrants employed in gold and diamond mines in South Africa. The British government wanted the independent Boer republic to grant full citizenship rights to these 41, 000 mainly British immigrant settlers (Uitlanders). Paul

Kruger, the Transvaal President, believed the Uitlander issue was being used by the British government as a way of ending the independence of the Boer republics.

If the Uitlanders had been given full voting rights they would eventually grown strong enough to elect a government for their own choosing. This was a prospect the independent Boers would not contemplate. Throughout the crisis, Kruger retained the conviction that the British government would not compromise over the issue. The Uitlander dispute was really the final straw in a long standing Anglo-Boer antagonism. In addition to the disagreement over the extent of British rights in the Transvaal, there was an underlying economic dimension to the dispute. In the late 19th century gold was discovered in the Transvaal.

This new development led to confrontations such as the infamous Jameson raid. In 1895 Jameson led a small group of 600 men financed by Cecil Rhodes in a failed attempt to instigate an Uitlander rebellion in Johannesburg. The new store of gold transformed the economic balance in the region. The Transvaal changed from being a backward agricultural economy into a country which would rapidly increase in prosperity and one which threatened to dominate the British colonies in South Africa. However, much of the Transvaal's new wealth was in the hands of British and German gold mineowners (Rand millionaires). The economic role played by the ' Rand millionaires' in the origins of the war has been the subject of historical controversy.

It appears that the major mineowners did support the Uitlanders claims for voting rights, primarily it seems because they believed that it would be difficult to attract British and European skilled workers to an area in which they were denied basic civil rights. The stubbornness the Transvaal government showed towards the Uitlanders was viewed as a severe handicap in the continuing effort to attract labour and investment, both of which were vital for long term expansion. Therefore, the 'Rand millionaires' felt they stood to profit from an extension of voting rights to the Uitlanders. Indeed, J. A Hobson claimed that the war was caused by a "conspiracy of financiers" for whom the Uitlander issue was a cloak to hide a desire for private profit. In order to consider who or what caused the war it is necessary to decide which two of the parties initiated the conflict.

Since it is clear that the British were on the military offensive the question is whether the war was fought in British self-defense? At the time of the conflict, a common argument was that the Transvaal routinely crushed Uitlander freedoms. It must be stressed that this argument was initiated as a wartime justification. However the historical consensus has been to reject the self defense interpretation. J. A Hobson criticises protectionism as a cause for the Boer War.

Instead for him, British capitalism encouraged a misallocation of wealth which led investors to seek higher investment returns in developing foreign markets. Governments, seeking to protect their investors commitments abroad followed imperialist policies. Imperialism, argues Hobson did not benefit the state as a whole but served the interests of financial strongmen. In the Boer War, Rand millionaires such as Cecil Rhodes embodied Hobson's

<https://assignbuster.com/to-1899-1902-lie-essay/>

general idea that capitalist intrigues rather than Uitlander grievances were the real cause of the conflict.

According to Hobson, the Uitlanders cared little about the grievances that so aroused British fury. Hobson's most fundamental example was the Jameson raid. For him, Cecil Rhodes backed Jameson in an attempt to open the Transvaal to his corporate mining interests. This was an explicit example of a financier acting as the real force behind Anglo-Boer antagonism. Although Hobson's views on imperialism can be accepted his assessment of the Jameson raid has become less certain over time. This is because Rhodes may not have solely masterminded the raid instead recent research has indicated that high level British officials may have encouraged Rhodes to support Jameson changing the raid from a manifestation of capitalist expansion into a government sponsored covert operation.

The roles played by Joseph Chamberlain (Colonial Secretary) and Sir Alfred Milner (British High Commissioner) remain the most vital elements in explaining why Britain went to war. Both Chamberlain and Milner did express concerns about the dangers for British interests in Southern Africa of a independent Transvaal seemingly determined to cause difficulties for British interests in the region. For his part, Joseph Chamberlain soured Anglo-Boer relations in the run up to war by firstly informing Kruger that the agreements Britain signed at the end of the First Boer War had not (as the Transvaal government believed) restored full control over domestic policy to the Republic. Secondly, the appointed Milner, a man known as being hostile to the Transvaal as High Commissioner for South Africa. Thirdly, he successfully encouraged the City of London to deny the Transvaal loans for long-term

investment. Yet whether Chamberlain did all this as part of a deliberate plan to instigate a war with the Boer republic remains open to question.

It appears he wanted the Transvaal to accede to British demands on behalf of the Uitlanders. Alfred Milner can be viewed as a 'warmonger' as he placed enormous pressure on the Transvaal government in the road to war. He constantly pressed the Uitlander issue, created anti-Boer feeling in the South African and British press, put pressure on the City of London to deny the Transvaal capital, gained support from the 'Rand millionaires' and persuaded many leading figures in the Unionist government to support him. Milner was convinced there was more important issues than the grievances of the Uitlanders at stake, that being British supremacy in South Africa and the existence of Britain as a great power. In his dealings with Kruger, Milner took an aggressive and uncompromising stance. He demanded the Uitlanders be granted full citizenship of the Transvaal within 5 years, In May 1899, Kruger offered the Uitlanders full citizenship within 7 years in return for British recognition of the independence of the Transvaal in domestic matters, Milner rejected both.

Therefore, on 11th October 1899, the Anglo-Boer war began. Therefore, as with most historical events, the Boer War had multiple origins. This is not to say, however, that all causes are equally useful for explaining the origins of the war. For instance the idea that the war was honestly fought over Uitlander grievances were shown to be more propaganda than the real truth and the self defense interpretation has subsequently become unpopular. Hobson's argument that a capitalist minority motivated the war has remained resilient since its formation nearly a century ago.

While parts of the foundation based on accepting Rhodes as the mastermind behind the Jameson Raid have been somewhat eroded by the introduction of newly revealed documents, the overall structure remains standing. The significance of the Boer War marks the dividing line between the passionate imperialism of late Victorian England and the loss of confidence in Britain about its future. This loss of confidence may not have been completely warranted but it was widely felt all the same. After the Boer War, the British never believed as strongly as they had before it that the British Empire was one on which the sun would never set.

There were many who expressed pessimism about the future. This shows how much the bungled attempt to teach the Boers a lesson had permeated the British view of its long-term relations with the people of its Empire. Finally there was a growth of anti-imperialism. Before the war the worst motive attributed to supporters of imperialism was excessive patriotism. Imperialism could even be seen as a positive mission designed to bring civilization to underdeveloped countries. After the war this was no longer the case.

Imperialism became synonymous with maverick politicians, capitalist cliques and methods of barbarism.