

# Various forms of imperialism and british imperialism essay sample



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Describe various forms of imperialism emerged in 19th century Europe.

Discuss British colonialism's influence on Germany during 1895-1905 and how Germany reacted.

Imperialism experienced its peak development by the late 19th century with numerous European nations leading in the movement. Referred to 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"(Johnston, 2000, p. 375)<sup>1</sup>, European states such as Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia engaged themselves in excessive aggression to influence and control weaker nations, especially those in Asia and Africa. These imperialistic activities were largely "shaped by expansionist and capitalist systems" (Johnston, 2000, p. 375)<sup>2</sup> and were featured by spread of rulers' sovereignty outside their own countries; annexation of foreign territories, exploitation of economic benefits in foreign lands; military occupation and cultural manipulation. There was "tremendous inequality" (Galtung, 1971, p. 81)<sup>3</sup>- nations succumbed to the threat of imperialism were exploited, suppressed and marginalized.

European imperialistic movements were driven by strategic reasons. The empires aimed at creating advantageous political, economic, military and cultural conditions for their nation building. Political imperialism by ambitious powers was exhibited by the occupation of overseas nations which were previously independent. Availing themselves with an opportunity to disseminate their national glory and prestige, the powers were to intervene, take over the weaker nations' autonomy to rule, exercise, 2 Johnston, Ronald

John(2000) The Dictionary of Human Geography. Oxford, Blackwell

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Publishing, p. 375 3 Galtung, Johan (1971) A Structural Theory of Imperialism. Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 8, No. 2 p. 81 significant influence on decision makings and even turn them into colonies. British's political exploitation of Mughal state is among the most notable example: Mughal's government and administrative system was forced to make resemblance that of Great Britain.

The very motive of political domination explained why fierce competition had developed among the aggressors- they aimed to prevail over the rest of the nations and take up the leading role in continental Europe by means of political control over other countries. Economic imperialism was best represented by the extensive profit-oriented activities carried out in subordinate states -forced opening of the economically significant areas with armed forces for foreign trade, accompanied with extremely unfair trading terms, exploitation of natural resources and labour, monopolization of markets and an unreasonable extent of intervention in local transportation. These activities were encouraged by capitalism and commercialism, aiming to get as many economic benefits as possible from the weaker nations. The Scramble for Concessions in China in 1897-98 displayed how European nations competed and ate up economic rights in the region Imperialism with military motives also displayed territorial occupations, but were for strategic reasons.

Artillery advancement, ice free ports and well-established railway network were in absolute favor to ambitious nations. Therefore, they snatched at militarily important cities overseas, for defense purposes and to secure an advantageous position for future aggression. For cultural imperialism, these <https://assignbuster.com/various-forms-of-imperialism-and-british-imperialism-essay-sample/>

strong European nations rationalized their aggression by advocating white supremacy. Missionaries were dispatched in large scale to foreign lands to preach, spread Christian ideas and other European values. This was driven by overwhelming evangelism and sense of white superiority. Powerful external culture gradually took over certain, if not all, local traditions and values. Imperialistic activities were greatly motivated by nationalism, commercialism, protectionism and a deep-rooted sense of superiority among European nations and had developed the above forms.

The United Kingdom had started setting up overseas colonies and trading ports since the late 16th century. She reached her climax as the world's largest colonial empire by the early 20th century, creating a great empire comprising hundreds of "colonies, protectorates and mandate territories" (Louis, 2006, p. 272)<sup>4</sup>. The nineteenth century was named "Britain's imperial century" (Hyam, 1993, p. 235)<sup>5</sup>. British active colonial policies had inserted remarkable influence on continental Europe, especially in intensifying relations between European states due to the resultant vicious competition of colonies.

Continuous colonial expansion led to tense diplomatic relations between Britain and Germany. Numerous disputes broke out. The Berlin-Baghdad Railway initiated by Germany in 1899 antagonized Britain and Russia. "Britain opinion hardened against the railway project" (Biesinger, 2006, p. 268)<sup>6</sup> for it might undermine her economic interests in Africa. The railway linked Berlin to the Persian Gulf, which offered Germany an easier entry to African territories and her colonies. This was obviously disadvantageous to Britain, who held numerous colonies and strong influence within 4 Louis, W. <https://assignbuster.com/various-forms-of-imperialism-and-british-imperialism-essay-sample/>

Roger (2006) *Ends of British imperialism: the Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization*. New York, Tauris & Co. LTD p. 272

5 Hyam, Ronald (1993) *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion*. Cambridge, Palgrave Macmillan. p. 235

6 Biesinger, Joseph A (2006) *Germany: a reference guide from the Renaissance to the present*. New York, Infobase Publishing. p. 268

the area. Although there came diplomatic intervention from other European nations, Germany insisted on the railway project and carried out tardily, facing distractions from Britain, Russia and France - the Entente Alliance (Biesinger, 2006, p. 268)7.

The Boer War was an armed struggle broke out in 1899-1902 between the British and the Boers. Even though there was no direct involvement of Germany into their armed conflicts, the Boers gained much sympathy from the rest of the Europeans, particularly Germans, who in return conveyed strong anti-British sentiment. In addition to the uncivilized conflicts, British attempts to restart expansion in South Africa provoked the Germans. " A violent outburst of popular Anglophobia was triggered off" (Wilson, 2001, p. 6)8. General Colmar von der Goltz concluded from the situation that " a war between Germany and Britain was unavoidable" (qtd. In Wilson, 2001, p. 6)9.

While British Empire dominated the world scene since she put forward colonial expansionism in 16th century, Germany and other European nations also witnessed rapid growth. Their development had posed a menace to Britain's economy. By the mid 19th century, tensions between the United Kingdom and Germany built up, foreshadowing the outbreak of " hot" confrontation between the two powers. The ever-growing power of British Empire urged Germany to react by strengthening its military power: " it <https://assignbuster.com/various-forms-of-imperialism-and-british-imperialism-essay-sample/>

would have been necessary if the existing fleet was to be expanded to protect German

7 Biesinger, Joseph A (2006) Germany: a reference guide from the Renaissance to the present. New York, Infobase Publishing. p. 268 8 Wilson, K. M (2001) The international impact of the Boer War. New York, Palgrave. p. 6 9 Wilson, K. M (2001) The international impact of the Boer War. New York, Palgrave. p. 6 trade" (Troschitz, 2009, p. 12)10. Germany passed the Navy Laws in 1898. Not just for the sake of foreign trade, Germany also wished that this could serve as " a power-political lever" to oust Britain from her position of " guarantor of the balance of power" in Europe (Troschitz, 2009, p. 12)11. The setting up of advanced naval fleet within Germany had unavoidably irritated Britain. She deemed this a direct challenge to her naval supremacy, and responded by pragmatic expansion and restructuring of her own navy. A naval race between Germany and Britain started off. Suspicions and mutual hostility developed. Germany and Britain sought their own allies in Europe after the conflicts and formed military alliances. Europe was fragmented into two opposing blocs. Britain and Germany became rivals since then. This had been one of the underlying causes of the First World War in 1914.

Imperialistic movements throughout history, regardless of their forms, had proved that they are detrimental. They had handicapped countless nations to go for a healthy nation building path, and had caused many small countries to die out. British colonialism was a true disturbance to many other nations. Her aggressive approach had aggravated anxiety within Europe, deepening mutual distrust among nations. Her rivalry with Germany was <https://assignbuster.com/various-forms-of-imperialism-and-british-imperialism-essay-sample/>

particularly remarkable, as this paved the outbreak of World War One in less than a decade.

#### References:

- 10, 11 Troschitz, Robert (2009) *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism Between 1888 and 1914*. GRIN Verlag. p. 12 Bibliography
- Biesinger, Joseph A (2006) *Germany: a reference guide from the Renaissance to the present*. New York, Infobase Publishing. p. 268 Galtung, Johan (1971) A Structural Theory of Imperialism. *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2 p. 81 Hyam, Ronald (1993) *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion*. Cambridge, Palgrave Macmillan. p. 235 Johnston, Ronald John (2000) *The Dictionary of Human Geography*. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, p. 375 Louis, W. Roger (2006) *Ends of British imperialism: the Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization*. New York, Tauris & Co. LTD p. 272 Troschitz, Robert (2009) *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism Between 1888 and 1914*. GRIN Verlag. p. 12 Wilson, K. M (2001) *The international impact of the Boer War*. New York, Palgrave. p. 6