

imperialism in world war 1 essay sample

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Imperialism was one of the four contributing factors to the cause of World War One, along with secret alliances, militarism, and nationalism. It is the most important cause of WW1, because it created a build-up of tension in Europe and outside of Europe, and through imperialism, the three other causes were able to affect the beginnings of the war. Imperialism is defined as the governing of one people by another country, which was a recurring dilemma prior to WW1 due to the industrialist movement. Although not all events that fall into the imperialistic category were about controlling another country, they contributed to the war, and imperialistic events were the foundation of the cause of WW1. Within Europe, imperialism occurred at the height of industrialization.

As European countries were discovering more about the sciences and mass production benefits via industrialization, a demand and competition for more land and produce was developing, and this would create the tension needed to begin the First World War. Germany and Great Britain were two powerful European countries that had been trying to establish control in Africa and Asia, two countries that were not as strong as them, and relatively vulnerable. Due to rebellions of the native people and interferences by each other and other countries, they were not entirely successful. This lack of cooperation between European countries in the attempt to govern and control weaker states so as to use their products for trade caused tension, and finally after it built up to a certain point, war was the only option left. Imperialism led to the three other contributors to the war because without the tension induced by imperialism, secret alliances would not be necessary.

Alliances such as the Triple Alliance, which consisted of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy that lasted until the start of the war, and the Three Emperors League, which involved Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Germany and created tension prior to the war, were created in case of war, which would not be an issue had there not been minor conflicts occurring all over the world. Militarism was another factor, and the threatening behavior when powerful countries involved in powerful alliances begin forming unbeatable weapons would not have affected war had there not been a prior fear that war would be coming. England produced a ship made to kill in attempt to prove to the Germans that they still owned the sea, and this kind of behavior is what triggered an additional rise to the pressure building in Europe.

Nationalism relates closer to imperialism because it was due to nationalism that imperialism was not always successful. When the European powers attempted to invade and take over China, they were unable to due to the unity of the Chinese people, and also the interferences by other countries.

This nationalism prevented countries from extending control over many people, for rebellions occurred and changes had to be made. The Austro-Hungarian Ultimatum to Serbia was one of the examples of imperialism during WW1. On July 23 1914, Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip assassinated archduke Franz Ferdinand, who was to be the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. Austro-Hungary, realizing they were stronger than Serbia, issued an ultimatum with ridiculous demands, along with statements such as “ The Royal Serbian Government [is]... to suppress any publication which incites to hatred and contempt of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the general tendency of which is directed against its territorial integrity” and

more. In essence, the ultimatum demanded that Serbia renounce all rights to their self-governing and to be placed under the rules decided by Austro-Hungary.

However, Austro-Hungary was not aware of the alliance between Russia and Serbia, which brought Russia into the problem between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, which then created the need for Austria-Hungary to involve their ally, Germany, who encouraged a war-like solution to the problem. Through one action of a freedom fighter or terrorist, depending on which side you agree with, a whole upsurge of negative relations are formed, and already conflict is occurring. The ultimatum issued to Serbia was a direct example of imperialism. However, events such as the creation of the Dreadnought may also be considered imperialistic, even though it was not an attempt to overthrow Germany. In 1906, British Admiral Sir John “Jackie” Fisher established the Dreadnought into the British navy. Not only was the Dreadnought the fastest battleship around, but it also used a more effective form of weaponry that was more advanced than most battleships at the time. Created to frighten the Germans who were attempting to strengthen their navy under the control of Admiral Tirpitz in order to threaten the British navy.

Known for their power over the sea, the British created the Dreadnought to make it clear to the Germans that they were still so called “King of the Seas” and that Germany would never be able to defeat them. This is imperialistic because there was a surge for naval expansion, which stemmed from tension and also industrialism. One final example of imperialism as a cause of WW1 was the Berlin-Baghdad railway that was built in 1903 until <https://assignbuster.com/imperialism-in-world-war-1-essay-sample/>

prior to 1914, connecting Berlin and Baghdad, where the Germans wished to establish a port so as to expand trade. This railway would have threatened the British trade exports and imports, giving Germany an economic dominance through trade. The railway was also seen as a threat to Russia, for it extended into a zone where Russia had a dominant share in the trade. However, due to interferences by other countries because of the tension it created, the railway was never finished. This is an example of imperialism because it was Germany trying to extend its control over areas surrounding the railway being put in place, while also angering the Russians and the British, who were constantly fighting with the Germans throughout the beginning and during WW1.

Imperialism was a cause of WW1 because it developed the basis for tension to occur and after a continuous build-up of conflicts and frustrations; there was an outburst of war that was not only foreseeable, but also unstoppable. Different occurrences added to the pressure induced by the war, and led to the three other causes of war by means of threats, competition of power, and defense of nations. Imperialism made it possible for this conflict between countries to grow, and it stemmed from the industrialist movements attempting to expand and grow within countries, mainly in Europe. Although some may argue that the other three contributors were the main factors leading to WW1, none would have occurred without the introduction of imperialism to the world.