

Important Reasons of Imperialism

The Age of Imperialism came about as the Age of colonization was coming to a close in the early 1800's. The main time period for the Age of Imperialism was from 1870 through 1920. European countries were the countries that participated mainly in imperialism. The most predominant and powerful countries were England, France, Spain, Belgium, Germany, and Portugal. These countries all had political, social, and economical reasons to imperialize. There are many important social reasons that lead to imperialism like: Social Darwinism, white supremacy, new advanced technology, and Christianity. The race to build bigger empires, the push for nationalism, and lastly the drive to increase your country's social and economical status were all political reasons for imperialism. Economic endeavors like new markets, more raw materials, and a new place to start businesses and give out loans to help developing colonies were also a main cause for imperialism. The Age of Imperialism was the product of many social, political, and economical reasons, ideas, and endeavors to imperialize.

There were many economical reasons for imperialism. One of the main reasons was the possibility of new untouched, by the rest of the world, markets and trade. The industrial revolution had just occurred in Europe so European businesses were brimming with all types of products that they could sell to a bigger and broader market. As a new colony was added to the empire it opened up new markets to the industrial businesses from the imperializing country. These new colonies and markets were fresh places for both import and export possibilities. Powerful businesses could sell their products to a market that desperately needed what they had and at the same time spend less money buying products from the colony's markets. Also, most of these new colonies were strategically placed along the coast or in areas where there were raw materials for export; as seen in document 9. Since the colonies were along the coast it made it easier for the imperial powers to get to the colonies and also transport goods to and from them. Another affect of imperialism was seen when England started with colonies in the southern cone of Africa and moved northward toward the British controlled Sudan and Egypt trying to connect the two parts of their colonies. With the same future goal in mind the French colonies started on the northwestern coast of Africa and almost made it to the eastern coast of Africa; this is also shown in document 9. These two imperial powers tried to stretch their colonies from one end of Africa to the other because if they could build a railroad across Africa, for the transport of goods, they could affectively control almost all of the African trade markets. Besides new untouched markets there were also untapped mineral, raw products, food sources, land, and human resources. Many European businesses wanted to get their hands on the raw material that Africa held. Document 1 shows that many businesses and industries couldn't wait to imperialize. One of the

biggest exports of Africa during the Imperial Age was the slave trade. The slave trade brought in huge amounts of trade and money to the imperial powers and it was fairly easy to stuff/force thousands of people on boats when the imperial powers had guns to use to do so. Another big export of Africa was the minerals. In countries, especially South Africa, there were many unused mineral resources like diamonds and iron. These rare minerals were a very important export because they could be harvested cheaply then sold for a much higher price to the other European countries. Unfortunately for European countries these minerals took time to harvest and couldn't be harvested in huge amounts or reliably, but raw products could. In equatorial Africa there were and are massive, expansive rainforests that could easily be cut for wood to be sold to forest deprived countries in Europe. Because there were such expanse areas of forest the imperial countries could cut all they want and never feel like they were going to reach an end. Many of the farmers in Africa were willing to destroy the soil to grow crops that could be sold on the European market, and grow a lot of them. They would grow immense fields of cotton, which would in turn destroy their soil, but they would turn a profit off the cotton industry. Compared to the number of people in Africa there seemed to be a relatively good amount of free land which European countries thought that they could build on and possibly create new farmland. Even though it was tough to farm on most of the before unused land farmers would expand their land to include this land so that they could hopefully produce more products to be sold. Lastly bankers and loan companies were pushing imperialism. Bankers wanted to make loans to developing colonies and "backward" countries so that they could basically start to build their own infrastructure; as supported by document. European countries had many strong and important economical reasons to drive for imperialism but those weren't the only reasons that European countries had for the new age of imperialism.

Another cause for European countries to push for imperialism was the political aspects. These political reasons were to find (or start) a new sense of nationalism, build a bigger, stronger empire, to stop the competition from growing, and the advantages that the new economical growth would have on the political state. Nationalism was when a country tried to unite its people under one flag and have them caught basically in blind patriotism; when people love their country possibly too much no matter what is happening. By conquering and colonizing Africa people were brought together by the thought of helping their nation grow and imperialize. This was also seen as a nation's will power to expand/grow and a nation's glory in greatness, which was one political reason that invoked imperialism; document 3 shows evidence of this affect. Document 3, while a little extreme in its view of economic reasons for imperialism, says "none of the colonial undertakings was motivated by the quest for capitalists profits; they all originated in political ambitions...in a nation's will power... glory or national greatness". Another very important political reason was the drive to build an empire. This was also a useful political tactic to get people in the European country to focus less on feuds within the country and focus instead on the undertakings of building an empire. By getting the people to focus on the national goal of building a bigger empire tensions between social, racial, and almost any other dispute would be put aside to further the nation as a whole. The bigger an area that a nation conquered and controlled the more focused on the empire as a whole the people came. A nation could show its political might through how big its empire was. Another, lesser, reason to imperialize fast was to keep an enemy or just any

other European nation from imperializing first and growing quicker. If a country could gain more land faster than its opponent and grow quicker economically it would be unrivaled politically. Lastly a political reason to imperialize was the affect that the new prosperous economy would have on the political state. The new growth would mean that the political state would become stronger and more whole. The political reasons are just one of the three main factors that contributed to imperialism.

The last main factor besides political and economical reason was the many social ideas of the time. There were many social reasons that lead to the push for imperialism. Social Darwinism, the idea of white supremacy, the spreading of Christianity, and new advanced technology were all reasons that Europeans had to imperialize. Social Darwinism was the evolutionary theory that went with how people and countries evolved. In Europe it was widely accepted that white man was the “fittest” race and the only one truly fit to survive and conquer other races. William L. Langer said in his book *The Diplomacy or Imperialism* “psychologically speaking... evolutionary reaching was perhaps most crucial. It not only justified competition and struggle but introduced an element of ruthlessness”. Langer is saying that the theory of Social Darwinism causes ruthlessness among people because it condones the idea that the races must compete in the idea of the “survival of the fittest”. There were also people on the other hand though that thought that the nations of white people were already the most evolved and “fittest” race and that these people of Africa were not. There was also the belief that because white man was so great everything was their right. In document 4 Cecil Rhodes expresses that he believes that the race of Anglo-Saxons and the British people in general were the greatest people on earth just for the reason that they were white, British, and were Anglo-Saxons. Rhodes also felt that more land and territories were meant for the taking by Anglo-Saxon people, because it was their birth right as the greatest race on earth. Since white men were the absolute greatest race on earth that made it their burden to raise these uncivilized people from Africa up to become a more “fit” race. These people of Africa were exiled sons, sullen people, and a half-devil half-child race according to the poem *The White man’s Burden* in document 6. This poem shows that some people think that God has given them the task raising these unworthy, evil people out of their own despair and into the white man’s light and grace. These people were so uncivilized and barbaric that it was believed by many that they couldn’t self govern, educate, or do anything much on their own. The common answer as shown in document 7 was to just take over the area and control it. Lastly along with imperialism came Christianity. As imperialism spread another social factor to continue imperialism was Christianity. Some believed that the only way to bring order and these confused, unfit people into some sort of grace was to spread and enforce Christianity. “We could uplift and civilize them...” Document 7 says in regard to non-white people that were supposedly barbaric and unfit to be left to themselves. Basically, the main social factor that contributed to imperialism was to uplift the unfit people of non-white, uncivilized, barbaric races and further the race of the white man, Anglo-Saxon, or Brit. But on a side step, technology also played a small part in the social reasons for imperialism. Since the technology of European nations was so much more advanced they thought of themselves as more civilized and smart, enforcing their already existing notions of greatness. The European powers had much more advanced weapons which made taking over these new African territories easy and showed their complete dominance. Document 8 tells how the French were able to easily invade and go

where ever they wanted in Vietnam because they had guns and powerful warships. Again, these technological advancements over the other nations just enforced the idea of white supremacy and social Darwinism. All of these many social reasons were a big part in the furtherance and start of imperialism along with the political and economical factors.

The start and causes of imperialism derive from the three main factors: social ideas, political causes, and economical reasons. Broadly all of these categories will create a more powerful nation whether through social dominance and thoughts, economic growth and gain, or political unity, strength and might. All of these main factors contributed to the starts, spread, and massive growth of imperialism from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. Imperialism was basically brought about because of the push to better economies, to unite and strengthen the political state, and to dominate other areas socially with the ideas that the country believes are correct.