

CAUSES OF THE NEW IMPERIALISM

Historical Context: Between 1870 and 1920, European imperialism accelerated due to economic, political and social forces. The Industrial Revolution stirred the ambitions of European nations, and with the advances in technology, these nations were able to spread their control over the less-developed areas of the world. This empire-building frenzy has been studied by historians who offer a variety of perspectives on its causes.

DIRECTIONS: The following documents provide information about the causes for the new imperialism. Examine the documents carefully, and answer the questions that follow.

DOCUMENT A**Imperialism and World Politics**

By: Parker T. Moon; he points out which groups were most interested in imperialism.

Question: Which groups are seeking colonies according to this author? Explain each group's reason.

The makers of cotton and iron goods have been very much interested in imperialism. This group of import interests has been greatly strengthened by the demand of giant industries for colonial raw materials. . . Shipowners demand coaling stations for their vessels and naval bases for protection. To these interests may be added the makers of armaments and of uniforms. The producers of telegraph and railway material and other supplies used by the government in its colony may also be included. . . . Finally, the most powerful business groups are the bankers. Banks makes loans to colonies and backward countries for building railways and steamship lines.

DOCUMENT B

U.S. Senator Alan J. Beveridge in 1898.

Question: According to Senator Beveridge, why should America become imperialistic?

".....The Pacific is our ocean...And the Pacific is the ocean of the commerce of the future...The power that rules the pacific, therefore, is the powers that rules the world. And, with the Phillipines, that power and will forever be the American Republic.

".....American factories are making more than the American people can use; American soil is producing more than they can consume. Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must and shall be ours. . . . We will establish trading posts throughout the world as distributing points for American products. We will cover the ocean with our merchant marines. We will build a navy to the measure of our greatness."

DOCUMENT C

Raymond Aron, in The Century of Total War, suggests another cause for imperialism.

Question: What does this author say was the cause for imperialism?

"None of the colonial undertakings was motivated by the quest for capitalist profits; they all originated in political ambitions . . . the nations' will to power . . . glory or national greatness."

DOCUMENT D**The White Man's Burden**

By: Rudyard Kipling

Questions:

1. According to the poem, what is the "white man's burden?"
2. How did imperialism actually help colonial peoples? Use evidence from the poem to support your answer.

Take up the white man's burden
Send for the best yet breed
Go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need,
To wait, in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild
Your new caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the white man's burden
The savage wars of peace—
Fill full the mouth of famine,
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
(The end for others sought)
Watch sloth and heathen folly
Bring all your hope to nought

DOCUMENT E

President William McKinley explains why the United States took over the Philippines.

Question: How does President McKinley explain the U.S. takeover of the Philippines?

“We could not leave them to themselves. They were unfit for self-government. They would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain’s was. There was nothing left for us to do but to take them over. Then we would be able to educate the Filipinos. We could uplift and civilize and Christianize them.”

DOCUMENT F

Cecil Rhodes, a successful British imperialist in Africa, expresses his position in

Confession of Faith, written in 1877.

Question: What does Cecil Rhodes believe is the reason for imperialism?

I contend that we [Britons] are the finest race in the world, and the more of the world we inhabit, the better is for the human race. . . . It is our duty to seize every opportunity of acquiring more territory and we should keep this one idea steadily before our eyes that more territory simple means more of the Anglo-Saxon race, more of the best, the most human, most honorable race the world possesses.

DOCUMENT G

In The Diplomacy of Imperialism, William L. Langer suggests another reason.

Question: According to Langer, what was the reason for the new imperialism?

But the economic side . . . must not be allowed to obscure [hide] the other factors. Psychologically speaking . . . evolutionary teaching [about the “survival of the fittest”] was perhaps most crucial. It not only justified competition and struggle but introduced an element of ruthlessness.

DOCUMENT H

This is from a letter sent by Phan Thanh Gian, governor of a Vietnamese state, to his administrators in 1867.

Question: How does this Vietnamese man explain French imperialism in Indochina?

Now, the French are come, with their powerful weapons of war to cause dissension among us. We are weak against them; our commanders and our soldiers have been vanquished. . . . The French have immense warships, filled with soldiers and armed with huge cannons. No one can resist them. They go where they want, the strongest ramparts fall before them.

DOCUMENT I

Mark Twain, a member of the Anti-Imperialist League, along with former President Grover Cleveland, Samuel Gompers, and Andrew Carnegie, comments on the Philippine War.

Questions:

- 1. How does Twain believe the US has become a “World Power?”**

“We have pacified some thousands of the islanders and buried them; destroyed their fields; burned their villages. . . . we have acquired property in the three hundred concubines and other slaves. . . . and hoisted our protecting flag over that swag. . . . and so, by these Providences of God—and the phrase is the government’s, no mine—we are a World Power. . . . I have seen that we do not intend to free, but to subjugate the people of the Philippines. We have gone there to conquer, not to redeem. It should. . . be our pleasure to make those people free and let them deal with their own domestic questions in their own way. . . .”

Assignment:

Which economic, political, and social forces were most responsible for the new imperialism that began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?