

Imperialism (a government of other people, by other people and for other people) – Causes, Justifications, and Opposition

Causes

1. Industrialism and capitalism
 - a. Need for raw materials
 - b. Markets
 - c. Cheap labor
 - d. Military and naval bases (often to protect investments, stem uprisings, and refueling – coaling stations)
2. Missionary zeal
3. Direct vs. Indirect Rule (political and economic domination)
4. Led to large armies and navies, competition for empires, and eventually wars.

Justifications (see IMPERIALISM -- from *Voices 1870-1914* by Peter Vansittart and Rudyard Kipling, “White Man’s Burden”)

1. ***Social Darwinism*** – In the survival of the fittest, white Europeans (because they were able to conquer areas that became colonies) were superior and had the right to rule. Often imperialists saw their own nation or race (Anglo-Saxon for Cecil Rhodes) as the most superior of all. For the superior race to thrive, other races needed to be subjugated and some thought kept from “breeding.” Social Darwinism was also an argument used against the proletariat and the poor, arguing that the wealthy deserve to be on top since they won the competition for survival and are the fittest, while the poor lost. Helping the poor, through welfare and pro-union legislation actually goes against nature. Social Darwinism also encouraged anti-semitism.
2. ***Trustees of Civilization*** – Since European civilization, society, and culture were superior to other civilizations, it was the duty of Europeans to “civilize” the natives and teach them how to act, pray, learn, and eventually govern themselves. Only by becoming Western, could natives become educated, responsible, and proper. Once the natives have reached the heights of the West, the imperialists would leave them to rule themselves.
 - a. “White Man’s Burden”
 - b. “*Mission Civilisatrice*”
 - c. Christian missionaries (conversion and education)
3. ***White supremacy – Racism*** (fear of blacks, “the yellow peril,” and other races). Whites will be outnumbered and overrun by inferior races.

Opposition (see Opposition- quotes from Fanon and Gandhi)

1. **Contra-Social Darwinism** –
 - a. Evolution occurs over many, many generations. Social Darwinism is really an argument for why those presently on top should stay there.
 - b. Humans evolved because of cooperative communities, not individual effort.
 - c. The struggle for existence does not apply to human groups in the way they apply to plants and animals. It is precisely by sublimating the kill-or-be-killed mentality that human societies transcend the struggle for life.

- d. Each group and race has something to contribute to the totality of civilization. The deliberate destruction or suppression of any group lessens the others and prevents the full development of cultural evolution.
2. Imperialism does not pay. While a few profit economically from colonialism, the cost of military occupation, administration, etc. hurts the home country.
3. Imperialism is immoral. It hurts the colonized by exploiting them (economically, politically, socially, culturally, and psychologically), it also hurts the colonizers (through arrogance and being trapped by the roles they must play.) (See George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant," where he argues, "when the white man turns tyrant, it is his own freedom that he destroys.")
4. Imperialism opposes liberalism and democracy, especially when applying the idea that all people are created equal.
5. Imperialism distracts from needed domestic and military investment. (For example, the French should be building up its military to oppose Germany.)
6. We must learn from and respect other cultures rather than trying to make everyone conform to a European model.