

DBQ 15: NEW IMPERIALISM: CAUSES

Historical Context

Between 1870 and 1920, the rate of European imperialism increased. This was due to economic, political, and social forces. The Industrial Revolution stirred the ambitions of European nations. The advances in technology allowed these nations to spread their control over the less-developed areas of the world. Historians have studied this empire-building frenzy. They have offered a variety of perspectives on its causes.

■ **Directions:** The following question is based on the accompanying documents in Part A. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of each document and the author's point of view. Be sure to do each of the following steps:

1. Carefully read the document-based question. Consider what you already know about this topic. How would you answer the question if you had no documents to examine?
2. Read each document carefully, underlining key phrases and words that address the document-based question. You may also wish to use the margin to make brief notes. Answer the questions that follow each document before moving on to the next document.
3. Based on your own knowledge and on the information found in the documents, formulate a thesis that directly answers the document-based question.
4. Organize supportive and relevant information into a brief outline.
5. Write a well-organized essay proving your thesis. You should present your essay logically. Include information both from the documents and from your own knowledge beyond the documents.

Question: Which economic, political, and social forces were most responsible for the new imperialism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?

PART A

The following documents provide information about the causes of the new imperialism. Examine each document carefully. In the space provided, answer the question or questions that follow each document.

(continued)

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Document 1

In this excerpt, author Parker T. Moon pointed out which groups were most interested in imperialism.

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 make loans to colonies and backward countries for building railways and steamship lines. . . .

Source: Parker T. Moon, *Imperialism and World Politics*, Macmillan, 1936 (adapted)

Which groups were seeking colonies, according to this author? Explain each group's reason.

Document 2

This excerpt was written by American Senator A.J. Beveridge in 1898.

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. . . .

According to Senator Beveridge, why should America become imperialistic?

(continued)

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Document 3

This excerpt suggests another cause for imperialism.

... [N]one of the colonial undertakings was motivated by the quest for capitalist profits; they all originated in political ambitions ... the nations' will to power ... [or] glory or national greatness.

Source: Raymond Aron, *The Century of Total War*, Doubleday & Co., 1954 (adapted)

What did this author say was the cause of imperialism?

Document 4

Cecil Rhodes was a successful British imperialist in Africa. This excerpt is adapted from his position on imperialism.

I contend that we [Britons] are the finest race in the world, and the more of the world we inhabit, the better it 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 simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race, more of the best, the most human, most honourable race the world possesses.

Source: Cecil Rhodes, *Confession of Faith*, originally written at Oxford, 1877 (adapted)

According to Rhodes, why should Britain pursue a policy of imperialism?

(continued)

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Document 5

This excerpt suggests another reason for 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. . . .

Source: William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, Knopf, 1935 (adapted)

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

Document 6

This excerpt is from Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The White Man’s Burden” (1899). It gives another explanation for imperialism.

Take up the white man’s burden
Send forth the best ye 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.

According to the poem, what was the “white man’s burden”? _____

(continued)

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Document 7

In this excerpt, President William McKinley explains why the United States took over the Philippines.

We could not leave them to themselves. They were unfit for self-government. 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. . . .

Source: General James Rusling, "Interview with President William McKinley," *The Christian Advocate*, 1903 (adapted)

How did President McKinley justify the U.S. takeover of the Philippines?

Document 8

This excerpt gives another reason why Europeans were able to increase their colonial holdings. This is from a letter sent by Phan Thanh Gian, governor of a Vietnamese state, to his administrators in 1867.

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.

Source: Phan Thanh Gian, retranslation from *Focus on World History: The Era of the First Global Age and Revolution*, Walch Publishing, 2002 (adapted)

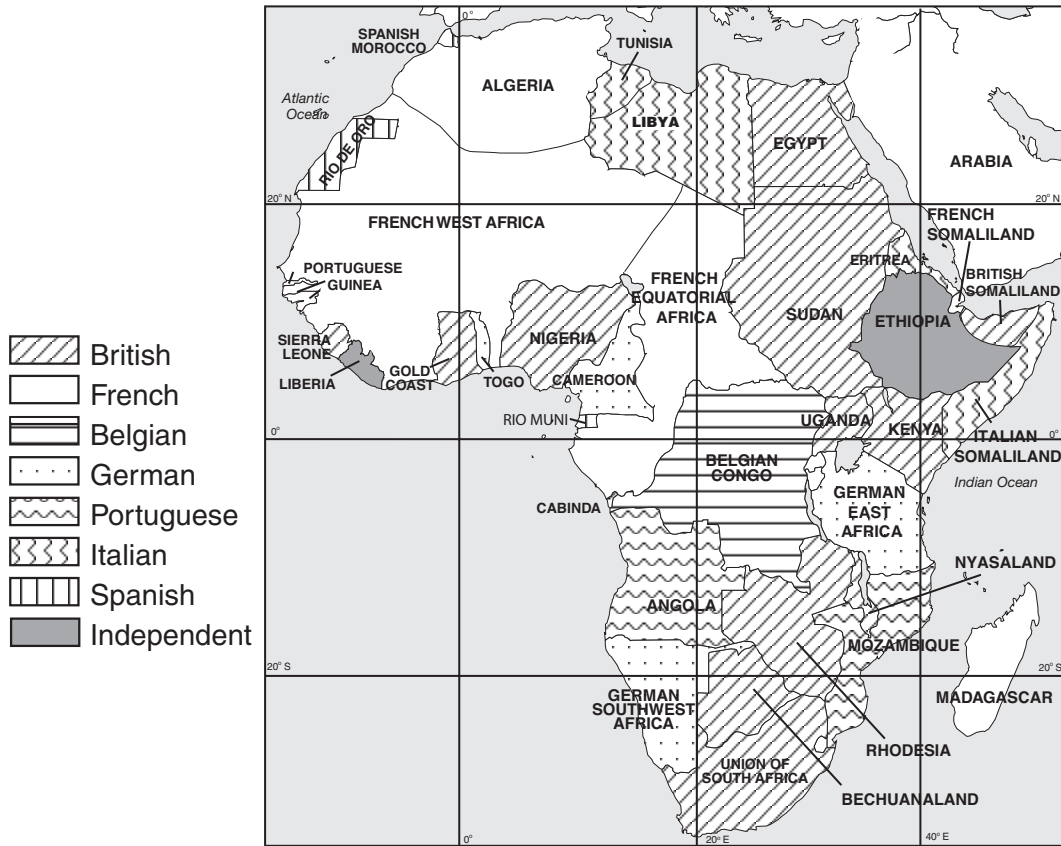
How did this Vietnamese man explain the French imperialism in Indochina in 1867?

(continued)

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Document 9

This map details European Imperialism in Africa in 1914.



What cause for imperialism is evident in this map of Africa? Explain.

PART B

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