



Perspectives on Nationalism

In this assignment, you will demonstrate that you can accurately explain the point-of-view of historical figures from the age of imperialism. You will recall that you did this for historical figures from the French Revolution. Now, we will see the links between nationalism and imperialism (which comprise half of the M.A.I.N. causes of WWI) by considering the rationale and mindsight behind European expansionism and colonialism.

Begin by reading perspectives on imperialism and colonialism from both British and African historical figures.

Part 1: British Perspectives

Excerpt from Cecil Rhodes's *Confession of Faith* (1877)

I contend that we are the finest race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race. Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings what an alteration there would be if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon influence, look again at the extra employment a new country added to our dominions gives. I contend that every acre added to our territory means in the future birth to some more of the English race who otherwise would not be brought into existence. Added to this the absorption of the greater portion of the world under our rule simply means the end of all wars, at this moment had we not lost America I believe we could have stopped the Russian Turkish war by merely refusing money and supplies.

Excerpt from Lord Curzon's *The True Imperialism Speech* (Birmingham Town Hall in 1907)

Wherever the Empire has extended its borders...there misery and oppression, anarchy and destitution, superstition and bigotry, have tended to disappear, and have been replaced by peace, justice, prosperity, humanity, and freedom of thought, speech, and action....

But there also has sprung, what I believe to be unique in the history of Empires, a passion of loyalty and enthusiasm which makes the heart of the remotest British citizen thrill at the thought of the destiny which he shares, and causes him to revere a particular piece of colored bunting as the symbol of all that is noblest in his own nature and of best import for the good of the world.

Excerpt (the first two stanzas) from Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" (1899)

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.

In patience to abide,

To veil the threat of terror

And check the show of pride;

Take up the White Man's burden—

By open speech and simple,

An hundred times made plain

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Questions

1. From the point-of-view of the British, who benefitted from British imperialism? Why? How?
2. From the point-of-view of the British, who was hurt by British imperialism? In your answer, try to define "the white man's burden" according to Rudyard Kipling? (You might recognize Kipling as the author of *The Jungle Book* [1894] that inspired the Disney movies.)
3. When Cecil Rhodes writes, "I contend that we are the finest race in the world," whom did he mean by "we"? Include in your answer an attempt to define "ethnic nationalism" in your own words.
4. What would the British imperialists have thought of Britain's going to war in 1914?

Part 2: African Perspectives

Excerpt from *The Coming of the Pink Cheeks*: Chief Kabongo, as told to Richard St. Barbe Baker

It was in these days that a Pink Cheek man came one day to our Council. He came from far, from where many of these people lived in houses made of stone and where they held their own Council.

He sat in our midst and he told us of the king of the Pink Cheeks, who was a great king and lived, in a land over the seas.

"This great king is now your king," he said. "And this land is all his land, though he has said you may live on it as you are his people and he is as your father and you are as his sons."

"This was strange news. For this land was ours. We had bought our land with cattle in the presence of the Elders and had taken the oath and it was our own. We had no king, we elected our Councils and they made our laws. A strange king could not be our king and our land was our own. We had had no battle. No one had fought us to take away our land as in the past, had sometimes been. This land we had had from our fathers and our fathers' fathers, who had bought it. How then could it belong to this king?"

"With patience, our leading Elder tried to tell this to the Pink Cheek and he listened. But at the end he said, "This we know. But in spite of this, what I have told you is a fact. You have now a king—a good and great king who loves his people, and you are among his people. In the town called Nairobi is a council or government that acts for the king. And his laws are your laws."

Questions

5. Did Chief Kabongo of the Kikuyo tribe (in what became Kenya) welcome British imperialism? Why or why not?
6. What would Chief Kabongo have disagreed with most strongly in the British justification for imperialism? Why?