
IMPERIALISM, WAR AND REVOLUTION

The rise of imperialism

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Imperialism

Imperialism is the policy of extending a country's domination over other regions. The conquering country is the mother country (known as *metrópoli*). The acquired territories are its colonies. Around 1870, a new phase in the expansion of imperialism began. Britain and France were the pioneers of this new phase. Later they were joined by other countries, such as Germany, Italy, Belgium, Russia, the United States of America and Japan. In Africa, only Ethiopia and Liberia remained independent. In Asia, the Ottoman Empire, China and Persia were not colonies, but western countries forced them to grant trade advantages.

The factors of imperialism

Economic and demographic factors:

- Industrialisation. European countries used colonies to invest capital for a greater profit, to obtain cheap raw materials and to sell their industrial products.
- Migration. Population grew during the Industrial Revolution, but there was not enough work for everyone. Many Europeans went to live in the colonies. The transport revolution made migration easier because transport became faster, more efficient and cheaper.

Religious factors:

- Religious conversion. Converting the indigenous people of the colonies to Christianity was used to justify imperialism. Hundreds of Catholic and Protestant missions were founded.
- Political factors:
- Strategic goals. European countries tried to rule areas along the main sea routes.
- Competition. The great powers did not want another empire to dominate a region or gain all the profits from colonies.
- Prestige. The great powers believed that the colonisation of new territories could compensate for a humiliating defeat or help to increase nationalist sentiment at home.

Ideological factors:

- Racism. This was deep-rooted in the western world in the 19th century. Westerners believed the White race was superior, and that this gave them the right to rule over other peoples. Westerners considered it their mission to 'civilise' the other peoples of the world.

Scientific factors:

- Exploration. Scientific curiosity also contributed to imperialism. Geographic societies went on scientific expeditions all over the world. Once a territory had been found and explored, the country that organised the expedition claimed the right to conquer and exploit it.