

New Imperialism: Reasons for Having an Empire

The development of European and Japanese Empires in the last half of the 19th century was not a given or natural development. First, imperial expansion could be very expensive because of the wars involved. Second, once a colony was established it needed constant administration and policing. Not all Europeans and Japanese were convinced that empires were a good thing or even necessary. Thus, those who were interested in empire building needed to produce very

convincing reasons for doing so. We will look at three of the most important reasons offered by European and Japanese imperialists: the **civilizing mission**, the **economic** need for natural resources and new markets, and **nationalism**. Many Europeans and Japanese believed that they had a civilizing mission to improve other people whose cultures were believed to be either in a state of primitive development (Africa) or in a state of decay (China). Many

Europeans and Japanese also argued that empire was essential to the industrial process in that it provided cheap raw materials that lowered the cost of making goods and opened up new world markets, thus improving the nation's economic health. Lastly, many Europeans and Japanese believed that empire was an essential aspect of national greatness as well as a mark of world power status. Here, ideas of nationalism were closely linked to empire building.

Glossary of Terms

New Imperialism: a term referring to the late 19th and early 20th century imperial expansion of countries such as England, France, Germany, and Japan.

Civilizing Mission: a belief—grounded in Social Darwinism—held by many imperial nations that some regions of the world were either in a state of fixed primitive development or a state of decline and required help in reaching a civilized status.

Nationalism: the belief that your nation possesses unique qualities that distinguish it from other nations.

Tariff: tax placed on imported goods.

Protectionist: a person who practices or believes in economic mechanisms, such as tariffs, designed to protect a nation's trade against the encroachment of competing nations.

THE CIVILIZING MISSION

For many imperial nations the spread of modern civilization and modern ideas, often called the “civilizing mission,” was an important part of imperialism. Some political leaders used the Civilizing Mission as a powerful argument for empire.

*Compare the two quotes on the next page and answer the questions.
Choose people from your group to be Jules Ferry, Prince Konoe, and Sun Yat-sen.*

1. Though spoken by men on opposite sides of the earth, what are the similarities in the two quotes?
2. What makes the Japanese and French Empires different than earlier ones like the Spanish Empire?
3. Name at least three things that colonized peoples supposedly get out of their interaction with Japanese and European Imperialists.

Jules Ferry, “On French Colonial Expansion”:

Gentlemen, we must speak more loudly and more honestly! We must say openly that indeed the higher races have a right over the lower races.... They have the duty to civilize the inferior races.... In the history of earlier centuries these duties, gentlemen, have often been misunderstood; and certainly when the Spanish soldiers and explorers introduced slavery into Central America, they did not fulfill their duty as men of a higher race.... But, in our time, I maintain that European nations acquit themselves with generosity, with grandeur, and with sincerity of this superior civilizing duty.

—*Internet Modern History Sourcebook*,
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html>

Prince Konoë, “On Japanese Education in China” (December 1899):

The instruction of Chinese students, centered around the Japanese language, will instill scientific thinking in them, and arouse a sense of nationhood. They will live in dormitories, just like our Japanese students.

—*Peter Duus et al.*
The Japanese Informal Empire in China, 1895-1937.
(Princeton University Press, 1989)

Now read the short quote from Sun Yat-sen, an important twentieth-century Chinese revolutionary who was educated in the West.

Sun Yat-sen, “Fundamentals on National Reconstruction” (1923):

Revelations of Chinese history prove that the Chinese as a people are independent in spirit and in conduct... During the periods when their political and military prowess declined, they could not escape for the time from the fate of a conquered nation, but they could eventually vigorously reassert themselves... Nationalistic ideas in China did not come from a foreign source; they were inherited from our remote forefathers... This is our nationalistic policy toward races within our national boundaries. Externally, we should strive to maintain independence in the family of nations, and to spread our indigenous civilization as well as to enrich it by absorbing what is best in world civilization, with the hope that we may forge ahead with other nations towards the goal of ideal brotherhood.

—*Internet Modern History Sourcebook*,
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html>

1. Compare the quote from Sun Yat-sen to the quote from Prince Konoe. For Prince Konoe, from whom will the Chinese learn what it means to be a nation? For Sun Yat-sen, in comparison, from whom will the Chinese learn what it means to be a nation?
2. Do the writings of Sun Yat-sen seem anti-Japanese or anti-European? How does he view non-Chinese cultures and societies?

THE INDUSTRIAL MISSION: NATURAL RESOURCES AND NEW MARKETS

The Japanese and European Empires were also driven by what they perceived as economic concerns. Colonies produced raw materials such as cotton (grown in Egypt) and jute (grown in India). These raw materials were then shipped to factories owned by Japanese

and European manufacturers who transformed raw goods into finished products. Raw materials from the colonies became an essential part of Japanese and European industrial economies: cotton grown in Egypt, for example, became cloth; jute grown in India became rope.

Having your own colonies that produced raw material was a way to get around trade barriers and **tariffs**, the taxing of shipped goods. By avoiding trade barriers and tariffs, manufacturers were able to lower their production costs.

Read the quote below and answer the questions.

Jules Ferry, “On French Colonial Expansion”:

In the area of economics, ... what our major industries... lack more and more are outlets. Why? Because next door Germany is setting up trade barriers; because across the ocean the United States of America have become protectionists, and extreme **protectionists** at that; because not only are these great markets... shrinking, becoming more and more difficult of access, but these great states are beginning to pour into our own markets products not seen there before.

—*Internet Modern History Sourcebook*,
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html>

1. According to Jules Ferry, what is the real problem with France’s industry?
2. What does Ferry mean when he says “protectionists”? What is being protected? Who benefits? Who loses?
3. Explain how having colonies relieves the economic pressure on a French manufacturer.

1. Indonesian Plantations

European and Japanese empires dramatically impacted peoples and cultures throughout the world. Traditional structures of work, leisure, family, and land ownership were altered by Japanese and European colonization. Africans, Asians, Indians, and

Latin Americans were forced to work on plantations or in factories for wages. These people not only provided a workforce, they also contributed to the empire's economic health both by paying taxes and by buying products manufactured by their

imperial rulers. More colonies meant more people who could potentially pay taxes and buy manufactured goods, but first Africans, Asians, Indians, and Latin Americans needed to have wage-earning jobs.

Look at the images (IMAGES 1 and 2) and answer the questions.

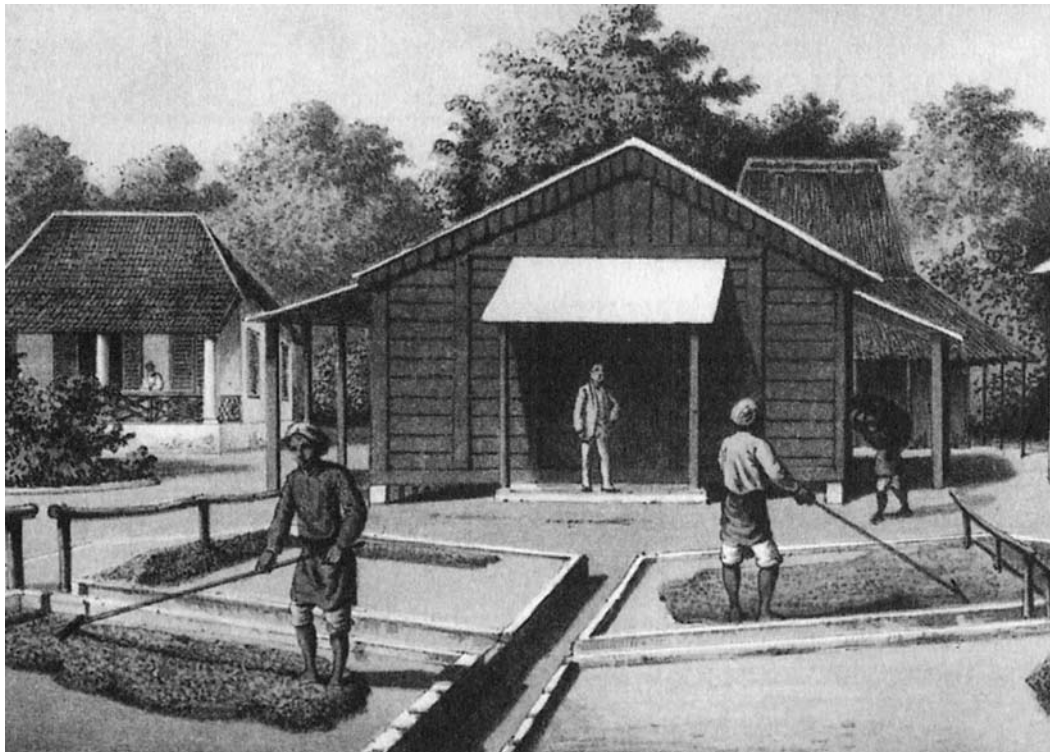


Image 1. Plantation in Indonesia.

From Bonnie Smith, *Imperialism: A History in Documents*. Page 65.



Image 2. Tea Plantation in Ceylon.

Library of Congress.

- Judging by their clothing and activity (**IMAGE 1, page 9**), who do you think is European and who do you think is Indonesian in the image? Label who is European and who is Indonesian.
- Judging by their activities (**IMAGE 1**), who do you think owns the plantations?
- Who do you think is working for wages (**IMAGE 1**)?
- Describe the people working in the image above (**IMAGE 2**). What are their ages, roughly? Name this type of labor.

2. Chinese Women Workers in a Japanese Factory

When we think of the Industrial Revolution, we usually think of factories. We also tend to visualize these factories as appearing 1.) only in Europe and America and 2.) being filled with hard-working and underpaid European and American laborers. Yet this is simply not the complete story. Britain built factories

in India and South Africa, for example, and France built them in Senegal and Algeria. This section of the lesson looks at Japanese factories in Manchuria in Asia. The Industrial Revolution changed the way work was done by using technology and machines to do work that was once done by hand. It also made class

differences more apparent with the rise of working and middle classes. Examine the image of the Chinese women laborers in a Japanese spinning mill and the images of the Japanese factory manager and his family. Answer the questions.

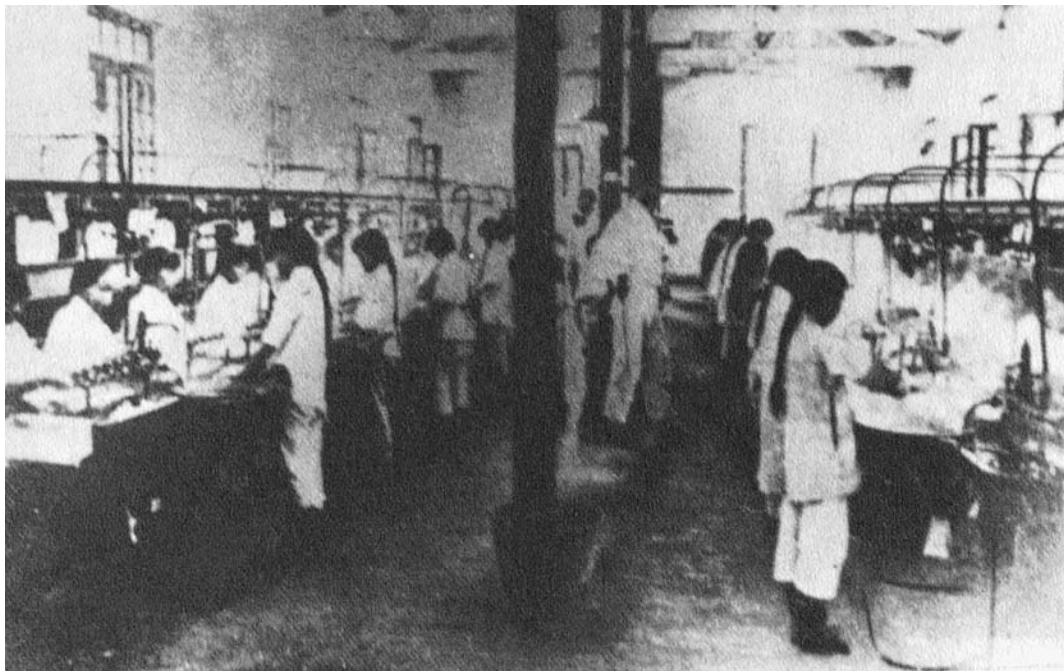


Image 3. Chinese Women Workers in Manchuria.

From Peter Duus, et al., eds., *The Japanese Informal Empire in China*.

- The image above (**IMAGE 3**) is a textile factory filled with Chinese women workers. Describe how this image represents the Industrial Revolution by examining the placement of the women and the work they are doing. How are goods, in this case cloth, being produced?
- Compare this image to what you know about the Industrial Revolution in Europe and America. What are the similarities. Can you see any differences?

3. A Japanese Factory Manager and his Family in Manchuria

The image on the previous page (**IMAGE 3**) is of working-class Chinese women. The two images below (**IMAGES 4 AND 5**) are of a Japanese factory manager, and his family, who ran a factory in Manchuria. Just as the Industrial Revolution changed

the way things were produced, it also changed social relations. This Japanese family lived a middle-class lifestyle in Manchuria. The Chinese women workers in **IMAGE 3** went home to their working class neighborhoods. If they had children, it is highly

likely that they worked as well. The Japanese manager, on the other hand, went home to his middle-class neighborhood, his wife and his kids (who certainly did not work in a factory and probably had a nanny).

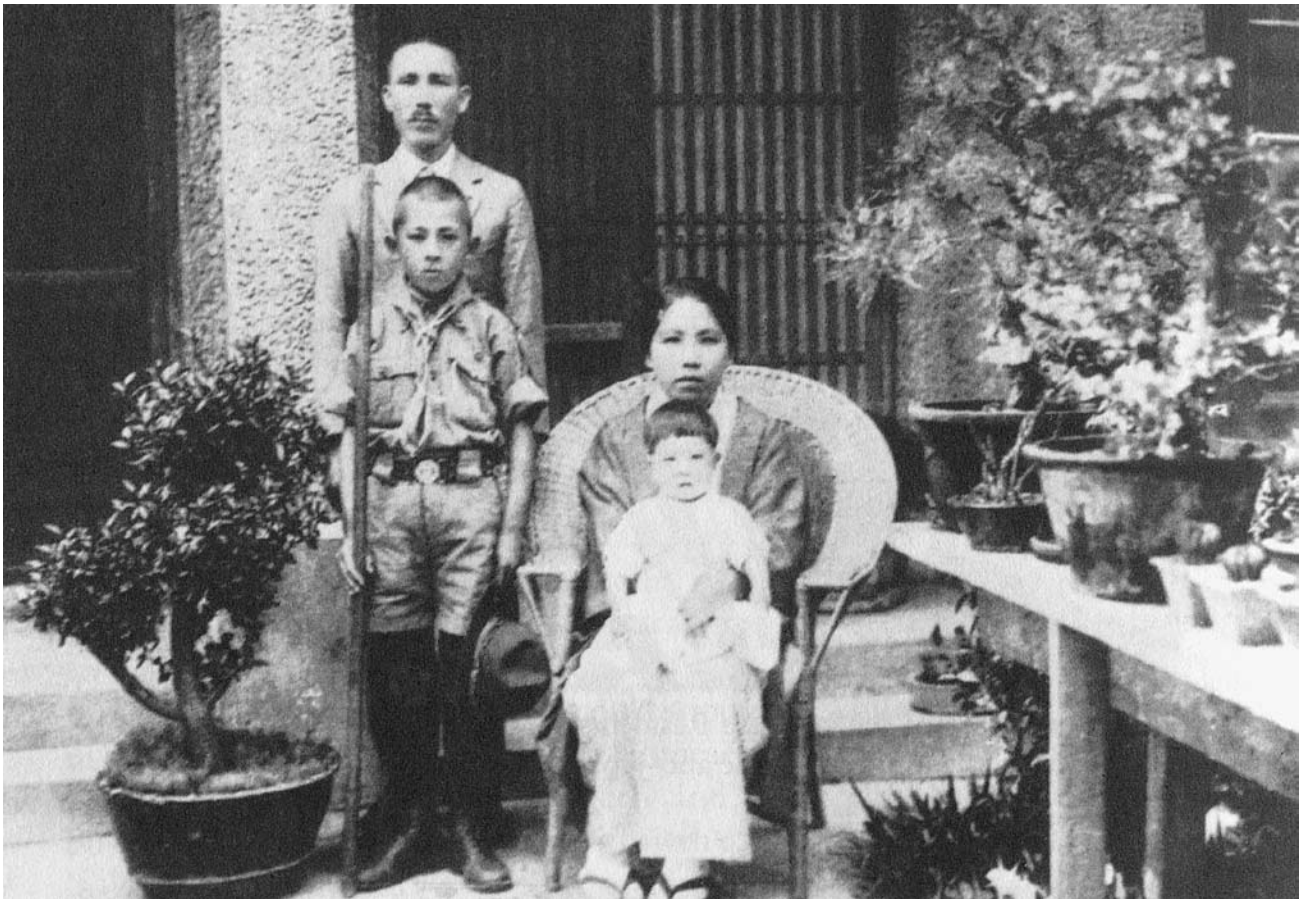


Image 4. Japanese Factory Manager and Family (1).

From Peter Duus, et al., eds., *The Japanese Informal Empire in China*.



Image 5. Japanese Factory Manager and Family (2).

From Peter Duus, et al., eds., *The Japanese Informal Empire in China*.

- Describe the family in the two images (**IMAGES 4 AND 5**). What types of clothes are they wearing? Do they look well-groomed? How big is the family?
- Compare the Japanese wife's clothes to the Chinese women's clothes in **IMAGE 3**. How are they different?
- What do the surroundings look like for the middle-class Japanese family? Does their home look like a nice place to live? Do you think the mother has help from maids or nannies?

NATIONALISM AND EMPIRE

One way of dealing with thousands of people involved in mass political movements such as labor and suffrage, which could be threatening to those in power, was to play on feelings of national sentiment. Political

leaders and certain political groups worked hard to make factory workers, for example, believe that they were part of a much larger national process. Although they worked in poor conditions for low wages, workers

were led to believe that they still had a stake in their nation. Many Germans from all social levels came to believe that the only way to become a great nation was to become a powerful empire.

Germany was a late entry into the race for empire as well as a young nation, but it nonetheless used many of the same ideas and values as other imperialists like Britain and France. Examine the “Constitution of the Pan-German League,” a powerful political pressure group (called a lobby) in Germany, and answer the questions.

CONSTITUTION OF THE PAN-GERMAN LEAGUE

1. The Pan-German league strives to quicken the national sentiment of all Germans and in particular to awaken and foster the sense of racial and cultural kinship of all sections of the German people.
2. These aims imply that the Pan-German League works for:
 - a) Preservation of the German people in Europe and overseas and its support wherever threatened.
 - b) Settlement of all cultural, educational, and school problems in ways that shall aid the German people.
 - c) The combating of all forces which check the German national development.
 - d) An active policy of furthering German interests in the entire world....

1. In what ways does the Pan-German League help to strengthen the German nation? Look closely at sections 2. (a), 2. (b) and 2. (c).

2. In what ways does the Pan-German League help to make Germans feel that they belong to a unique community? Look closely at section 1.

POST ACTIVITY ASSIGNMENT: SELLING EMPIRE TO THE PEOPLE

You have seen the way that the civilizing mission, economics, and nationalism were important justifications for having an empire. Keeping in mind what you have just learned, examine the advertisements (IMAGES 6, 7 and 8). The ads were meant for a European audience. Respond to each question using complete sentences. Place your answers on a separate sheet of paper.



- List the things that seem exotic or non-European in the advertisements.
- In what way are Africans and Asians used to make the advertised goods seem amazingly effective if not magical? Do you think Europeans were convinced?
- In what ways do the ads make Europeans seem superior to Africans, Asians, and other colonial peoples?

Image 6.

From Thomas Richards. *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*.

Founded in 1789, Pears' Soap sold powders and creams to the rich to help ensure the purity of their complexion. These are examples of advertisements for Pears' Soap seen in European publications in the late 1700s and early 1800s.

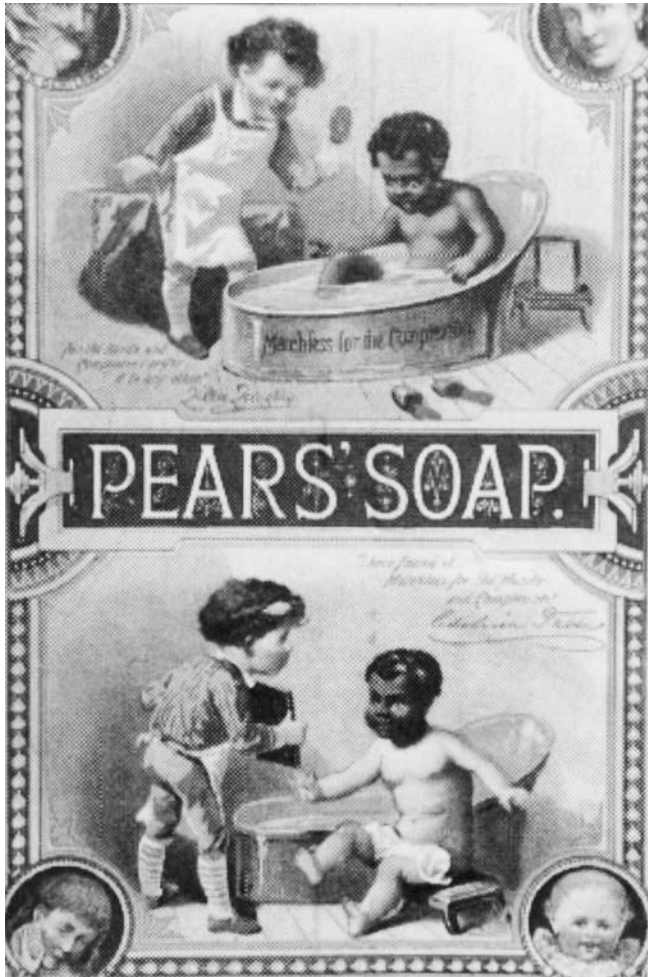


Image 7 (left).

From Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*.



Image 8 (right).

From Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*.

PEARS' SOAP IN THE SOUDAN.
 "Even if our invasion of the Soudan has done nothing else it has at any rate left the Arab something to puzzle his fuzzy head over, for the legend
PEARS' SOAP IS THE BEST
 inscribed in huge white characters on the rock which marks the farthest point of our advance towards Berber, will tax all the wits of the Dervishes of the Desert to translate."—Phil-Robinson, *War Correspondent (in the Soudan) of the Daily Telegraph in London, 1884.*