WOH2022 Final Exam

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Final Exam Questions

**Module 6: How did the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment contribute to the emergence of modern European imperialism?**

I would argue the enlightenment led to modern imperialism from two causes. Firstly, the enlightenment came with it technological and scientific advances which further pushed the technical advantage the European powers already had. The degree to which an invading force can impose itself on a native population is also going to be related to the advantage of its might economically and militarily, and scientific advancement usually comes with both. If your food supplies, ships, weapons, and anything else related to the logistics of long term and long-range colonization are improving at a rapid rate that will give the means if not the motivation to invasion. A defending force of literal spears and arrows against the might of the British Navy was never going to stand up to imperialism in any kind of real way.

The second way in which scientific progress influenced modern imperialism was to further press in the minds of Europeans that they were inherently superior to others. Afterall, if your society possesses the greatest technology and progress in the world at the time, it gave them an inflated belief that those things came from being naturally superior. This fed more into the thought process that the “superior” Europeans needed to impose their perceived superior society on other civilizations and people groups. This could be expressed as either a moral or inherit imperative, either to share technology with “lesser” people groups, or as a birth right to exert dominion on people seen as less than themselves. So, having superior technology and the power that comes with it helped fuel their perception of superiority.

**Module 7: Which of the revolutions in western Europe and the Americas had the greatest impact on politics and society?**

I think it would be very difficult to argue against the American Revolution as being the greatest global impact among the Western revolutions. Just looking at world events that directly came as a result of the American Revolution, France incurred a large debt from that war that turned into taxes, and those taxes turned into the French Revolution. Following the chain of events, the French Revolution led ultimately to the rise of Napoleon, and therefore the shape of politics and history in Europe in the subsequent 200 years. Napoleon begat the circumstances in Europe, and particularly Germany, that led the path to World War 1 and 2. So then just from a historical impact the American Revolution was a catalyst event for world history afterwards.

I would then further argue the American Revolution, its politics and drive for further individual freedom and demand of rights, led to many of the other revolutions that emerged in Europe. When other countries and people groups saw what the Americans were able to build and accomplish, that was really the beginning of the end for monarchies in Europe. France as stated had their, first, revolution as well as subsequent revolution. The push for freedoms and new governments was spearheaded by the American Revolution and was a more direct cause of change in European politics than the chain of events it caused second hand. Since all other Western revolutions were caused by this one, it is very easy to argue it was the most important one culturally and historically.

**Module 8: Why was Japan able to transform itself from an isolated society to a world power between the mid-1800s and the early 1900s?**

One reason Japan was able to accomplish such rapid advancement in many areas, technologically, economically, militarily, would be their unity that came through a very homogenous ethnicity. Many areas of the world where powerful nations have arisen historically have at least some degree of racial diversity. In Europe people groups over centuries mixed between borders such that you could for example easily see the mixing of German and French peoples, and similar situations happened in China and other world powers. Japan was able to motivate and focus their population based on a sense of Nationalism and racial superiority that was fed and influenced by their ethnic sameness. I don’t think it can be underestimated the fact that this population could all also draw on the same historical background to form the national unity which drove their progress.

It can also be said that Japan was able to rise in the way they did in part because of the disruption of what would have been rivals in the region at this time. China was experiencing occupation and oppression by Britain at the time during their “century of shame” and were not able to oppose them militarily. Russia after the war with Japan in 1904, and particularly during the Soviet Revolution, were not able to be an effective deterrent to Japans expansion in the Pacific. Thus, without any major powers in the region to keep them contained Japan was able to expand and take natural resources for themselves due to a lack of a nation powerful enough to stop them. It is then not very surprising that the end of their expansion came when they finally militarily ran into a nation whose military might they could not compete with, the United States.

**Module 9: Why did a new kind of imperialism emerge in the late 1800s and early 1900s?**

Two major factors contributed to the change in imperialism at this time frame. The first was the rise of Germany as a world power, who then identified Africa as an area of expansion that had not being exploited to the degree other areas of the world had been by other powers. In their desire and drive to match and compete with Britain on a global stage they started a period of expansion and imperialism into Africa to claim land and resources for their own empire. Germany’s drive into the continent then drove other European powers into a rush for Africa to not be left out of the new gold rush, so to speak. Arbitrary borders and countries that were not reflective of racial and ethnic realities were then created which are still massive problems in the region.

Another cause of the new imperialism was the thought that imposing European culture and technology on so called lesser peoples was a moral imperative. Since their countries possessed scientific progress, and at least in their eyes more advanced civilization, it was correct to impose this on “younger” countries to bring them into the modern world. Even if this was the public messaging and reasoning for expansion, it was a mask for the reality of wanting the profitable resources to be found in the African continent. I think it is ironic that in the modern era there is a new resource rush on Africa, this time being spear-headed by China, for rare earth resources and other materials that modern electronic devices need. Whichever moral reasons are laid over this fact, the true issue for expansion and imperialism in Africa was and is for their natural resources.