Beckert Response

Answer the following questions with evidence from Sven Beckert, "Empire of Cotton," *The Atlantic*, December 12, 2014.

All responses must be typed and submitted on Blackboard on the date listed in the course calendar.

Respond in a thorough, detailed manner.

1. Beckert describes the origins of the US civil war as a protest against "semicolonial dependence." What does he mean by this?

The economy of South was dependent on Europe, and the structure of production was insecure. Land owners produce cotton thanks to slave labour and sell it to old world countries: the industry was the same as before the independence. Protest against semicolonial dependence means that the purpose of civil war was to change the industrial structure that is dependent on the old world.

1. Why did observers in other parts of the world follow the progress of the US Civil War so closely?

As the old world was dependent on the cotton supply from the US, they had to prepare the case that cotton become more expensive: if the slavery is abolished, cotton will be more expensive since the labor costs rise. In addition, factories in the north would manufacture the cotton from the south, so the US might be their competitor. Therefore, the old world watched the new world carefully and tested non-slave industry.

1. Why is understanding the history of cotton production "key to understanding the origins of modern capitalism," according to Beckert?

Beckert explains how cotton production was dependent on slave labor and how the supply of labor changed after the abolition of slavery. Land owners had to pay for the labor, so they started to hire efficient workers. In addition, they learned that economy is affected by the law and government. Therefore, the change of cotton industry shows how liberalism and globalization form the modern capitalism.