

Prompt: Evaluate the extent to which railroads affected the process of empire-building in Afro-Eurasia between 1860 and 1918.

The Industrial Revolution started in Britain in the 18th century and led to incredible British wealth and power. As the tools and products of industrialization like railroads and steam engines spread across western Europe and the United States, they too grew in economic strength and power. This shifted the balance of power from Asia to the West. It soon became clear that for empires to grow stronger they also needed to industrialize. The extent to which the process of empire-building in Afro-Eurasia between 1860 and 1918 was affected by railroads was great. Although some empires relied on railroads to consolidate their power at home and to try to get rid of foreign influence such as the Ottomans and Qing, the most common use of railroads was to increase economic strength and consolidate power in conquered lands.

Empires who were losing influence relied on building railroads to consolidate power at home and to try to get rid of foreign influence. Shen Baozhen, a Qing dynasty official who favored industrialization wrote a memorandum to convince the court that railroads would benefit China, and to warn them of the dangers of allowing foreigners to build them, which would have given them more power and control in China. Baozhen saw that if the Chinese built railroads by themselves, they would provide jobs to the poor. He warned the Qing Court that foreigners would not respect Chinese farmland, homes or ancestral graves. Building railroad lines without foreigners would also weaken their power. This was written in 1867, shortly after the Opium Wars when China had lost land and political power giving Europeans spheres of influence in their country, so getting rid of foreign influence would have been important to him (D1). Eventually, the Qing dynasty started the Self-Strengthening program to try to industrialize and get out from the thumb of foreign influence, but it was largely unsuccessful and China would not get rid of foreign influence until the Xinhai Revolution in 1911. Similarly, as the Ottoman Empire was considering a railroad line from Damascus to Mecca in 1893, they discussed having the entire railroad financed and built by Muslims. Part of the purpose for building the line was to provide a Muslim owned and operated form of transportation so that Muslim's going on the Hajj could avoid dealing with foreigners who humiliated them. The report also mentions that this will raise the status of the Ottoman Sultan in the Muslim world, which was important as he considered himself the leader of the caliphate (D2). The Ottomans had been trying to get rid of foreign influence and consolidate their power for decades at this point, including the Tanzimat reforms which tried to bring in western ideas and industrialization. This was one more attempt to help save the empire.

The more common use of railroads in empire-building was to increase economic strength and consolidate power in conquered lands. For example, in 1899 British imperialist and entrepreneur Cecil Rhodes proposed linking existing railroads in British Egypt and South Africa by building new lines across East Africa, even going through German held territories. Rhodes probably saw the opportunity to move goods quickly in and out of Africa through this railroad as well as the opportunity to benefit from shipping German goods (D3). In French West Africa, in 1904, there was a similar proposal to build a railroad to increase economic activity to increase the power and wealth of France (D5). The Russian empire was also seeking to increase their power when they built the Trans-Siberian railway. A British politician, Sir Henry

Norman, who was apparently concerned about Russia's challenge to British power, spoke to the *News Chronicle* in 1901 to explain that the Russian railway would give them control of lands in the far East with the ability to challenge China and British holdings in China. If Russia were able to take control of markets in China it would vastly increase their wealth (D4). The use of Railroads in the process of empire building was enormous. Whether nations were trying to secure their power at home by growing stronger, or increase their economic and political power in conquered lands - railroads were an essential tool.

Contextualization: 1

Thesis: 1

Evidence from at least three docs that supports an argument: 3

Two uses of outside evidence to support an argument: 2

Two documents sourced: 2

Complexity: 1

Prompt: Evaluate the extent to which railroads affected the process of empire-building in Afro-Eurasia between 1860 and 1918.

The invention of the steam engine allowed for more efficient movement of peoples like soldiers, goods and ideas around the world and among empires. The key use of the steam engine can be found in the use of the railroad and trains. For land-based empires in Afro-Eurasia the train allowed for tighter control of their territory and increased economic gain.

In document one the Qing Dynasty official says that building railroads will bring jobs for the poor. In document 4, the English politician says that Russia can move soldiers to the east to challenge China with their trans-siberian railroad. Doc 5 shows a French governor in West Africa saying that the French can use the lands they conquered to benefit themselves economically if they build railroads. The map in Doc 3 shows that the British want to connect their holdings in east Africa from Cairo to Capetown. The British and French got their African lands that they were building railroads through at the Berlin Conference where European nations came together to divide up Africa so that they could colonize and benefit from it without having to fight other European nations to hold on to it. Railroads helped them hold those territories.

Contextualization: 1

Thesis: 1

Evidence mentioned from at least 2 docs in relation to the prompt 1

Evidence from two docs that supports the argument 1

Outside evidence 1

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In Afro-Eurasia between 1860 and 1918 railroads greatly benefitted the process of empire building. The use and construction of railroads did so by allowing different regions of the world to interact, provide reliable transportation, allowed the poor to work, and drew ideas and ambitions together. Railroads expanded all the way from Cairo to Capetown South Africa as an example of how “unbarbaric” railroads made the world.

Documents 5 and 3 support that people of the world were brought together by railroads. Doc 5 suggests that the railroad kept the different regions in which they were built from remaining barbaric with beneficial and effective steps. Doc 3 is a map of all of the railroads built in Africa that connect the people of Cairo in Egypt with the people of Capetown in South Africa.

Transportation wise, railroads were the best. Doc 2 suggests that the railroads that were built from Damascus to Mecca (proposed) would allow for Muslims to have another source of transportation for pilgrimage besides using foreign ships or riding on camels, which were ineffective and made Muslims subjected to humiliation.

Railways required large amounts of construction. Doc 1 suggests that the building of these railways would have provided a sustainable position of work for the poor. Shen Bao Zheng, who was a Qing dynasty official proposed this, as well as compared railways to the Great Wall, saying later generations could benefit from them.

Railways allowed civilizations to interact when they allowed the poor to obtain income, allowed Muslims to have a way of pilgrimaging without humiliating themselves. All of this led to advances, making them beneficial.

Thesis 1

Use of evidence from at least two docs related to the prompt 1

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Contextualization: 1

Thesis: 1

Evidence mentioned from at least 2 docs in relation to the prompt 1

Evidence from two docs that supports the argument 1

Outside evidence 1