

American History I – Exploration and Conquest – European Motives

Use the source below to help identify European *motives* for exploration. Respond to the questions on your own paper, using a header to identify the source. You will use the information gathered to synthesize responses for the homework assignment.

Mercantilism and Colonies

According to the theory of mercantilism, governments wanted to add gold and silver to their treasuries. To get that gold and silver, they hoped to export goods to other countries that were worth more than the products they imported. The other countries would then have to pay them the difference in gold or silver.

Colonies played an important role under mercantilism for several reasons. Colonies were supposed to produce crops that companies in the home country could sell for a profit. They were expected to provide raw materials that could be used by manufacturing companies in the home country. For example, the numerous forests in North America provided lumber for England, which had fewer trees. The colonies also were supposed to provide markets for items manufactured in the home country.

In some cases, colonies could provide the home country with gold and silver. For example, Spain established colonies in Mexico and South America because of the gold and silver in those areas.

These were some of the reasons that colonies were desirable in theory. In actual practice, colonies had both costs and benefits. These advantages and disadvantages are shown in the chart below.

Benefits and Costs of Mercantilism	
Benefits	Costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">+ The colony might have gold or silver that could be added directly to the home country's treasury.+ The colony could grow food to feed people in the home country or to be traded at a profit to the other countries.+ The colony could supply raw materials useful to home-country manufacturers.+ Colonists would buy manufactured goods produced in the home country.+ By controlling all shipping to and from the colony, the home country could increase the number and skill of its sailors, who would strengthen the country's navy in the event of war.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Gold or silver might be costly to obtain and could be captured during transport.– Money was needed to fund armies to protect colonists from native peoples and to prevent other countries from taking control of the colonies.– Colonists might begin their own manufacturing companies and compete with home country companies.– Colonists might ship goods to or buy goods from other European countries.– If the manufactured goods colonists bought cost more than the food and raw materials they produced, they would not be able to pay for them.

Analysis Questions

1. Summarize the relationship between the system of mercantilism and the establishment of colonies.
2. In your opinion, what is the **key** benefit and **key** cost of mercantilism?
3. Suppose you were in charge of the government of a country that had colonies. What are some specific ways you would prevent people in your colonies from trading with other countries?
4. Why wasn't it the other way around? Why didn't Native Americans explore and conquer Europe? What else (besides mercantilism) is needed?

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Why England Should Sponsor Colonies: A Discourse on Western Planting by Richard Hakluyt

Although King Henry VII and a group of Bristol merchants had dispatched Italian explorer John Cabot to North America in 1497 to search for a route to Asia, no further English exploration was undertaken until the reign of Elizabeth I. In 1584 Hakluyt wrote a lengthy memorandum to Queen Elizabeth in support of a proposal by Sir Walter Raleigh to colonize the east coast of North America, known at the time as Norumbega. Elizabeth declined because of a lack of money, and thin funding was one of several reasons why the Roanoke Colony failed.

A brief collection of certain reasons to induce her Majesty and the state to take in hand the western voyage and the planting there.

1. The soil yields and may be made to yield all the several commodities of Europe...
2. The passage thither and home is neither too long nor too short, but easy, and to be made twice in the year.
3. The passage cuts not near the trade of any prince, nor near any of their countries or territories, and is a safe passage, and not easy to be [interfered with]...
5. And where England now for certain hundred years last passed, by the distinctive commodity of wool...has raised itself from meaner state to greater wealth...it comes now to pass that by the great endeavor of the increase of the trade of wool in Spain and in the West Indies...that the wool of England, and the cloth made from the same will become [inferior], and every day more inferior than the other...to plant at Norumbega or some like place, were it not for anything else but for the hope of the sale of our wool...
6. ...her Majesty may...have plenty of excellent trees for masts, of goodly timber to build ships and to make great navies, of pitch, tar, hemp, and all things incident for a navy royal, and that for no price, and without money or request.
10. No foreign commodity that comes into England comes without payment of custom once, twice, or thrice, before it comes into the realm...and by this course to Norumbega foreign princes' customs are avoided...
11. At the first [trade] with the people of those parts, the subjects of this realm for many years shall change many cheap commodities of these parts for things of high value there not esteemed; and this to the great enriching of the realm...
14. If the sea coast serve for making of salt, and the inland for wine, oils, oranges, lemons, figs, etc., and for making iron, all which with much more is hoped, without sword drawn, we shall [humble] the French, the Spanish, the Portuguese...and to the greater saving of the wealth of the realm
16. We shall by planting there enlarge the glory of the gospel...
22. The [swarm] of the wandering beggars of England, that grow up idly, and hurtful and burdenous to this realm, may there be unladen, better bred up...and to their own more happy state...[Points 19-21 list pirates, unemployed youth, and soldiers without a war to fight in similar circumstances – potential sources of trouble who could find a better life in America.]

Analysis Questions

1. According to Hakluyt, what are the economic advantages England might expect from colonizing Norumbega?
2. How will colonization strengthen England and weaken its rivals?
3. How will colonization help solve England's domestic problems?
4. How much concrete knowledge of the Americas does Hakluyt seem to have?

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The Origins of Portugal's Overseas Empire: *The Chronicle of Guinea* by Gomes Eannes de Azurara

Azurara's history details Portuguese explorations along the coast of West Africa down to 1448. In the following excerpts Azurara explains why Prince Henry the Navigator sponsored the expeditions and defends the consequent enslavement of West Africans. Trade in New Guinean slaves became an integral part of Portugal's commercial imperialism.

...after the taking of Ceuta (a Muslim naval base in Morocco) he always kept ships well armed against the Infidel, both for war, and because he had also a wish to know the land that lay beyond the isles of Canary and that Cape called Bojador, for that up to his time, neither by writings, nor by the memory of man, was known with any certainty the nature of the land beyond that Cape...he sent out his own ships against those parts to have manifest certainty of them all. And to this he was stirred up by his zeal for the service of God and of the Kind Edward his Lord and brother who then reigned. And this was the first reason of his action.

The second reason was that if there chanced to be in those lands some population of Christians or some havens, into which it would be possible to sail without peril, many kinds of merchandise might be brought to this realm...and also the products of this realm might be taken there, which traffic would bring great profit to our countrymen.

The third reason was that, as it was said that the power of the Moors (broad European term for Muslims) in that land of Africa was very much greater than was commonly supposed, and that there were no Christians among them, nor any other race of men...

The fourth reason was because during the one and thirty years that he had warred against the Moors, he had never found a Christian king, nor lord outside this land...he sought to know if there were in those parts any Christian princes...

The fifth reason was his great desire to make increase in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ and to bring to him all the souls that should be saved...And not only did I see the first captives (West African slaves who had been captured and transported to Portugal by licensed slave hunters) but their children and grandchildren as true Christians as if the Divine grace breathed in them and imparted to them a clear knowledge of itself.

Analysis Questions

1. What were Henry's motives? What seems to have been the greatest motive – economic, political, or religious gain or simple curiosity?
2. How does Azurara justify the enslavement of Africans? Be specific in your answer.
3. How might these kinds of motivations influence explorers in North America?

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Essay: "England on the Eve of Colonization" by Paul E. J. Hammer

When Elizabeth I died on March 24, 1603, she had been queen for almost forty-five years—longer than a majority of her subjects had been alive. Within a few years, Elizabeth's reputation would be burnished with nostalgia and her reign would be seen as a golden age. Nevertheless, the last two decades of her rule had been difficult and fraught with anxiety.

For some eighteen years, Elizabeth's England had been locked in open war with the Spanish empire of Philip II (succeeded by his son, Philip III, in 1598). In many ways, the conflict was about religion. Protestant England had long feared Spain was marshalling the forces of international Catholicism against it. By 1585, Elizabeth felt compelled to send troops to aid the (largely Protestant) Dutch to prevent the Spanish army completing its conquest of the Low Countries—the obvious base for an assault on England. English anxieties were further heightened by the sizeable Catholic minority among the queen's own subjects and continuing fears they might prove a fifth column for Spain. Philip II was not only determined to crush the English challenge, but was also infuriated by English piracy, not least against Spanish ships and settlements in the New World. The result was Spain's attempt to invade England by sea in 1588—what is today popularly called "the Spanish Armada." Famously, English cannon and fireships won the day, damaging the huge Spanish fleet so badly that many vessels were lost to storms in its desperate bid to escape home around the British Isles and back into the North Atlantic.

The great clash of 1588 was merely the end of the beginning of the war, not the beginning of its end. In 1589, England launched its own counter-Armada against Spain and Portugal—with almost equally disastrous results. Thereafter, the conflict increasingly became a land war on the Continent. Repeated drafts of raw English conscripts were sent to fight in France and the Low Countries, dying in droves. Maimed or unemployed veterans became an increasingly common sight in English towns. At sea, the bold claims that Sir Francis Drake and others had made for naval attacks against Spain and its possessions before the war were repeatedly disappointed. Despite a few striking successes such as the capture and sack of Cadiz, Spain's chief port serving the Americas, the more common outcome was that of the disastrous attempt to occupy Panama that left Drake among the dead. Spain fared even worse. Two new Armadas in 1596 and 1597 were severely battered by storms and proved total failures. Instead of large fleet actions, the most effective maritime operations involved the legalized piracy of English privateers. This became a huge industry along England's coastline, embracing vessels ranging from small owner-operated boats to private warships owned by noblemen, courtiers, and many of the same London merchants who were also launching long-range trading expeditions to the Mediterranean, Africa, and Asia.

During the mid-1590s, the burden of sustaining the war effort became even more difficult. After outbreaks of plague in 1593, the country was wracked by a succession of disastrous harvests during the middle years of the decade. London saw riots in 1595 and some of the queen's subjects may even have starved to death in more distant regions in the following years. Elizabeth's government was forced into a delicate balancing act, demanding heavy taxes to fund the war each year but also seeking to minimize the burden on her poorest subjects. Underlying this policy was a fear that excessive financial demands might provoke the sort of popular rebellions that had nearly torn the realm apart in 1549. While commanders bemoaned the military consequences of penny-pinching, Elizabeth sought to eke out her over-stretched finances by selling crown lands and pawning old jewels. Instead of rewarding courtiers with grants of land or titles, she also increasingly issued patents and monopolies. These royal grants cost her nothing and sometimes generated annual fees. They allowed the lucky recipients to reap their rewards by entering into partnerships with merchants to ensure control over some specific product, such as the collection of import duty on sweet wines, the printing of Latin primers, or the manufacture of salt or starch. The queen's subjects had to pay inflated prices to guarantee a suitably large profit to the monopolist and his partners. The proliferation of this crown-endorsed exploitation provoked widespread anger and prompted furious complaints when new parliaments met in 1597 and 1601.

Analysis Questions

1. According to Hammer, what role did religion play in creating rivalries among European powers? How did the powers seek to gain the upper hand against their religious adversary?
2. Why were English pirates set loose on Spanish ships? What were they after? Why (and how) did Spain have it?
3. How did England's financial troubles prompt the country towards colonization? Pay particular attention to the sections regarding land distribution, grants, etc.

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What Columbus Hoped to Gain: King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, Agreements with Columbus of April 17 and April 30, 1492

Among the many factors that contributed to Europe's expansion, perhaps none was more important than simple human ambition. There is no better example of this truth than Christopher Columbus (Cristoforo Colombo in Italian; Cristóbal Colón in Spanish), the Genoese mariner credited with the discovery of the New World. In two "capitulations," excerpts from which follow, Ferdinand and Isabella in April 1492 promised Columbus a large share of any economic benefits that might come from his voyage and extensive authority over lands he might discover. Preparations could now begin for Columbus's historic voyage that departed the Spanish port of Palos on August 3, 1492.

AGREEMENT OF APRIL 17, 1492

The things [asked] and which your Highnesses give and declare to Christopher Columbus...for the voyage which now, with the aid of God, he is about to make...in the service of your Highnesses, are as follows:

Firstly, that your Highnesses as Lords that are of the said oceans, make from this time the said Don Christopher Columbus your Admiral in all those islands and mainlands by his hand and industry shall be discovered or acquired in the said oceans...

Likewise, that your Highnesses make the said Don Christopher your Viceroy and Governor General in all the said islands and mainlands which as has been said, he may discover or acquire in the said seas...

Item, that all and whatever merchandise, whether it be pearls, precious stones, gold, silver, spices, and other things whatsoever, and merchandise of whatever kind, name, and manner it may be, which may be bought, bartered, discovered, acquired, or obtained...your Highnesses grant henceforth to the said Don Christopher, and will that he may have and take for himself, the tenth part of all of them, deducting all the expenses which may be incurred...the other nine parts remaining for your Highnesses...

AGREEMENT OF APRIL 30, 1492

Forasmuch as you, Christopher Columbus are going by our command, with some of our ships and with our subjects, to discover and acquire certain islands and mainland in the ocean, and it is hoped that, by the help of God, some...will be discovered and acquired by your pains and industry...it is our will and pleasure that you, the said Christopher Columbus, after you have discovered and acquired the said islands and mainlands...shall be our Admiral of the said islands and mainland and Viceroy and Governor therein...you may have the power to use and exercise the said office...and to hear and determine all the suits and causes civil and criminal...and may have power to punish and chastise delinquents...and that you shall have and levy the fees...according as our High Admiral in the Admiralty of our kingdoms levies and is accustomed to levy them.

Analysis Questions

1. What assumptions underlie Columbus's and the monarchs' statements about the authority they expect to exercise in the land Columbus discovers?
2. What role will each side play – what authority will Columbus exercise in the new lands he discovers and what role will be played by the monarchs?
3. What kind of material benefits do Columbus and the monarchs expect to gain from Columbus's promised discoveries? How will these gains be divided?