

Document 1

Source: Prince Leopold, heir to the throne of Belgium and future king, conversation, 1861.

Surrounded by the sea, Holland, Prussia and France, our frontiers can never be extended in Europe.... [But] the universe lies in front of us; steam and electricity have made distances disappear, all the unappropriated lands on the surface of the globe may become the field of our operations and of our resources.... Since history teaches that colonies are useful, that they play a great part in that which makes up the power and prosperity of states, let us strive to get one in our turn ... let us see where there are unoccupied lands ... where are to be found peoples to civilize, to lead to progress in every sense, meanwhile assuring ourselves ... the opportunity to prove to the world that Belgians also are an imperial people capable of dominating and enlightening others.

Document 2

Source: Benjamin Disraeli, British prime minister, speech to the House of Commons regarding the Suez Canal, February 1876.

I have never recommended, and I do not recommend now, this purchase either as a financial investment or as a commercial speculation. I have always and do now recommend it to the country as a political transaction, and one which I believe is calculated to strengthen the empire.

Document 3

Source: Joseph Chamberlain, British industrialist, politician, and reformer, speech, 1888.

We have suffered much in this country from depression of trade. We know how many of our fellow-subjects are at this moment unemployed. Is there any man in his senses who believes that the crowded population of these islands [the British Isles] could exist for a single day if we were to be cut adrift from the great dependencies which now look to us for protection and which are the natural markets for our trade? ... If tomorrow it were possible, as some people apparently desire, to reduce by a stroke of the pen the British Empire to the dimensions of the United Kingdom, half at least our population would be starved

Document 4

Source: Archibald Philip Primrose, Lord Rosebery, British politician and foreign secretary, letter to the *London Times*, 1900.

An empire such as ours requires as its first condition an imperial race – a race vigorous and industrious and intrepid. Health of mind and body exalt a nation in the competition of the universe. The survival of the fittest is an absolute truth in the conditions of the modern world.

Document 5

Source: Resolution of the German Social Democratic Party Congress, 1900.

World and colonial policy is pursued for the purpose of capitalist exploitation and for displaying military force ... [I]t corresponds first and foremost to the greedy desire of the bourgeoisie for new opportunities to invest its ever-increasing capital which is no longer content with exploiting the home market, and to the desire for new markets which each country tries to usurp to itself.

Document 6

Source: Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé, French diplomat, *The Master of the Sea*, Paris, 1903.

Diplomacy used to be concerned with the Mediterranean and the Bosphorous; now it has to do with China, the Niger, and the Congo ... The great states of Europe are dividing up the other continents of Africa and Asia in the same manner they would divide such countries as Italy or Poland ... What used to be a European balance of power is now a world balance of power, but it is subject to the same laws, and any country that does not wish to become less important must obtain as much new territory relatively as our rivals are doing.

Document 7

Source: Martial Henri Merlin, governor general of French Equatorial Africa, speech, 1910.

We went to new territories. We went there by virtue of the right of a civilized, fully developed race to occupy territories which have been left fallow by backward peoples who are plunged into barbarism and unable to develop the wealth of their land. What we exercised is a right, and if anyone denies this, you should firmly maintain that it is a right. We are entitled to go out to these people and occupy their territories; but, when we exercise this right, we, at the same moment are charged with a duty towards these peoples, and this duty we must never for one instant forget.