

## “A Natural Inclination to Submit to a Higher Authority” (1893)

In spite of the organized resistance of the Zulus in 1879, British tenacity and power prevailed. In his analysis of the “Scramble for Africa,” Sir Frederick Lugard, British soldier and administrator of some of Britain’s colonial possessions in the late nineteenth century, focused on the necessity of British action and the benefits that would naturally ensue. In 1893, fourteen years after the Zulu destruction of British forces at Isandhlwana, Lugard confidently proclaimed that Africans possessed “a natural inclination to submit to a higher authority.”

**Source:** “A Natural Inclination to Submit to a Higher Authority” is from Sir Frederick Dealtry Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire*, vol. 1 (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1893), pp. 379–382.

### SIR FREDERICK DEALTRY LUGARD

The Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom have unanimously urged the retention of East Africa on the grounds of commercial advantage. The Presidents of the London and Liverpool chambers attended a deputation to her Majesty’s Minister for Foreign Affairs to urge “the absolute necessity, for the prosperity of this country, that new avenues for commerce such as that in East Equatorial Africa should be opened up, in view of the hostile tariffs with which British manufacturers are being everywhere confronted.” Manchester followed with a similar declaration; Glasgow, Birmingham, Edinburgh, and other commercial centers gave it as their opinion that “there is practically no middle course for this country, between a reversal of the free trade policy to which it is pledged, on the one hand, and a prudent but continuous territorial extension for the creation of new markets, on the other hand. . . .

The “Scramble for Africa” by the nations of Europe—an incident without parallel in the history of the world—was due to the growing commercial rivalry, which brought home to civilised nations the vital necessity of securing the only remaining fields for industrial enterprise and expansion. It is well, then, to realise that it is for our advantage—and not alone at the dictates of duty—that we have undertaken responsibilities in East Africa. It is in order to foster the growth of the trade of this country, and to find an outlet for our manufactures and our surplus energy, that our far-seeing statesmen and our commercial men advocate colonial expansion. . . .

There are some who say we have no right in Africa at all, that “it belongs to the natives.” I hold that our right is the necessity that is upon us to provide for our ever-growing population—either by opening new fields for emigration, or by providing work and employment which the development of over-sea extension entails—and to stimulate trade by finding new markets, since we know what misery trade depression brings at home.

While thus serving our own interests as a nation, we may, by selecting men of the right stamp for the control of new territories, bring at the same time many advantages to Africa. Nor do we deprive the natives of their birthright of freedom, to place them under a foreign yoke. It has ever been the key-note of British colonial method to rule through and by the natives, and it is this method, in contrast to the arbitrary and uncompromising rule of Germany, France, Portugal, and Spain, which has been the secret of our success as a colonising nation, and has made us welcomed by tribes and peoples in Africa, who ever rose in revolt against the other nations named. In Africa, moreover, there is among the people a natural inclination to submit to a higher authority. That intense detestation of control which animates our Teutonic races does not exist among the tribes of Africa, and if there is any authority that we replace, it is the authority of the Slavers and Arabs, or the intolerable tyranny of the “dominant tribe.”

### Questions:

1. Why was Africa so attractive to competing European powers in the late nineteenth century?
2. Who was Cecil Rhodes and what was his perspective about “the expansion of English ideas and English principles”? Was he a great patriot or a vicious exploiter?
3. How did Sir Frederick Lugard connect nationalism with the economic argument for imperialism? How did he respond to the arguments presented by critics of imperialism? How did he justify his support of imperial expansion?
4. After reading the letters and eyewitness accounts of the Battle of Isandhlwana in 1879, what are your impressions? What price did the British pay for their imperialism? Was it worth it? And what does this say about the nature of native resistance? Were Zulu warriors inferior to British forces? What did the Zulus have to lose?