The Zulu Wars in South Africa pitted imperial competition for land in South Africa by industrial nations against nationalism (7-3.5). The Dutch, British, and African people all sought the land and resources of the country. In the early 1800s, Shaka Zulu of the Zulu Kingdom in South Africa created a centralized state. The Boers, Dutch settlers known as Afrikaners, began encroaching on lands of the Zulus. In a display of nationalism, Shaka Zulu led the South Africans in attacks against the Boers to protect his empire from Dutch control. His successors, however, were unable to continue his rule as the British exerted an increasing pressure in the area. In the 1880s, the Zulu War was fought against the British as the Zulus sought to retain independence, illustrating their growing nationalism. The Zulu nation, lacking the weaponry of the British, was defeated, and the Zulu nation became part of the British Empire.

The Sepoy Rebellion in India was a result of British imperialism there (7-3.5). The British East India Company dominated India after the decline of the Mughal Empire. To maintain control of British interests in India, the company hired Indian soldiers known as sepoyos to protect their trading interests which were extensive at this time. India was the “jewel of the crown” in the British Empire, as it supplied raw materials to Britain’s industries and was viewed as a potential market for the finished products. As Britain increasingly exerted its influence over India, the Indians became more oppressed and discontented in their citizenship. While Britain did build railroads, modern communication systems, and schools in India, they also suppressed the local culture. In 1857, amid rumors that the new gun cartridges were greased with beef and pork fat (the cartridge ends had to be bitten off in order to be used), the Hindu and Muslim sepoyos led a revolt known as the Sepoy Rebellion against the British. Following the uprising, which took a year to suppress, the British government took full control of India.
The Opium Wars and Boxer Rebellion took place in China as a result of imperial interests there (7-3.5). China was self-sufficient in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and therefore was not interested in buying goods from industrial nations. Britain, determined to open trade with China, found a product that the Chinese citizens willingly bought - opium. China attempted to halt the opium trade, but to no avail. Their defeat in the Opium War signaled the beginning of the increase in foreign influence in China as the British forced the Chinese to sign a treaty allowing Britain to begin trade in China (7-3.5). At the same time, China was undergoing an internal rebellion, the Taiping Rebellion, in an attempt to establish a kingdom in which no one would live in poverty. This rebellion, combined with increasing Western influence, led to increased pressure on the imperial government to reform. The self-strengthening movement was of little success. Taking advantage of the internal struggles, Europe, Japan, and the U.S. increasingly gained economic spheres of influence in this region. In 1899, the United States declared equal trading rights with China with the Open Door Policy (7-3.5). As a reaction to the newly declared Open Door Policy and the Chinese government’s failure to respond to internal and external issues, the Righteous and Harmonious Fists, renamed by Europeans as the Boxers, a nationalistic organization which used martial arts to try to remove foreigners from Chinese soil, led the Boxer Rebellion in an effort to rid China of all foreign influence. The Boxers struck out, killing many foreigners and Chinese Christians, while also causing major damage to foreign-owned shops and businesses. The Boxers were defeated by an eight-nation alliance consisting of nations that had economic interests there. The Chinese government was forced to pay the nations involved for damages done by the Boxers in the rebellion, and the eight nations were allowed to maintain their spheres of influence. Although the rebellion was a failure, it did lead to an increasing sense of nationalism and need for reform in China.

The Meiji Restoration in Japan was a response to Japan’s growing nationalism and desire to protect itself from imperial aggression it was witnessing (7-3.5). After being forced to open its ports to trade by the United States, the Japanese government decided to take progressive action in order to make its economy and military more like that of the Western powers. In 1868 the emperor of Japan took the title Meiji meaning “enlightened rule.” To respond to increasing imperial power in the region, the Meiji government decided to follow a Western model and even sent diplomats to study in Europe and the United States. These actions caused some negative reactions from conservatives in Japan, but the Meiji government continued its pursuits. Following these models, Japan was able to quickly industrialize and therefore began imperial conquests of its own. In 1894, Japan went to war with China in order to try to gain control of trade in Korea so that Japan could have access to raw materials and establish markets for their goods there. China had been in possession of Korea at the time. Japan was able to demonstrate to China and the world its new industrial might by quickly defeating China in the Sino-Japanese War. Japan gained control of Korea as a result.

Ten years later in 1904, Japan was once again able to show its power by quickly defeating Russia in the Russo-Japanese War. Russia wanted access to trade with Korea but Japan was still in control of Korea. As the Russians sent a naval fleet headed to Korea, the Japanese navy met them at sea and destroyed much of the Russian naval fleet. After a short period of fighting, the Russians surrendered in 1905, acknowledging Japan’s sole right to Korea. The Meiji Restoration therefore successfully made Japan an industrial nation and changed its status becoming a world power with imperial claims and ambitions that rivaled European nations and the United States.