

Colonialism

(loosely adapted from Colonialism:<http://www.tcnj.edu/~filak2/Colonialism.htm>)

Colonialism is the act of one country completely taking over countries or large areas so that the other countries or areas have to serve the needs and wants of the colonizing country. The colonizing country sets up the colonized country's political system and infrastructure so that it will serve the colonizing country, without regard to the needs of the people in the country that has been colonized. This was during a time of European **imperialism**, where many European countries competed against each other through a system of building foreign empires for military and trade advantages rather than go to war directly against each other.

When Europe began to go through the **Industrial Revolution** when free market capitalism took hold and manufacturing large quantities of goods for profit began, the countries of Europe began to compete against each other to take over the rest of the world.

Under the previous system, the **Feudal System**, the Monarchy and Aristocracy owned most of the land. The king gave large estates to his friends, important knights and relatives who promised to fight for the king and never fight against him. These people were the Nobles and together with less important other people who also promised to fight for the king, were all called **vassals**. Vassals were given land by the king with the nobles getting the lion's share, and lesser vassals getting some land they could lease to peasants. Most people were poor **peasants** that worked on the vassals' land in agriculture in return for rent or giving up a portion of their crops for the right to stay on the land and supposedly be protected by the feudal lords. These people were called **serfs**. Others who lived in towns or cities were called freemen and were often skilled craftsmen. They had to pay a tribute to the lord too, but were generally freer to do as they wanted, but were also poor.

After the Industrial Revolution took hold and new inventions and factories were able to do the work of many men, many peasants became homeless and could not find jobs, causing many of them to immigrate to other continents, like the Americas. Europe did not have nearly enough resources for its factories and was already full of people. Europe, through the travels of the Explorers such as Columbus, Magellan, all of the Conquistadors and others, realized the rest of the world had vast riches and resources. The other continents could provide resources. **Primary commodities** such as timber, rubber, metals and other raw materials were needed for the production process of factories in Europe. Colonialism began in the 1600's but became a very widespread practice by powerful European countries during the second half of the nineteenth century (1800's).

The European nations also wanted their colonies to possibly become a market for the goods produced by the market. In order to do this, the European powers had to defeat any organized power that stood in their way and had to make all of the people in the colony obey the colonizing power so that they would behave as the European power wanted them to behave. The European countries did this in many ways, none of them with much thought to the people who lived in the colonized country. Some of it was easily done through war, because Europe had invented superior weaponry. Once people were subdued through war, the Europeans had other ways to ensure they did not rise up again.

Looking back in history, nothing that the European countries did was not new or unique. Warlike, aggressive countries have always taken over other areas for similar reasons. The only difference this time was that the scale was global and Europeans had the attitude the places they were colonizing were primitive and backward thinking and needed Europeans to show them how to be modern and to bring them religion. Many of the countries colonized still speak the language of the colonizing country as an official language.

The changes made to the colonized nations and the native populations by Europeans created a lasting impact in former colonies. Most of the borders drawn between colonies were created in Europe, often to cut tribes and cultures of peoples into smaller parts and put them together with other different tribes. The Europeans then selected the leaders of the minority tribe for positions of leadership and education over the majority tribe, so that the tribes would fight with each other and not the European country. This was called **Divide and Rule**. In many cases, the Europeans were down right brutal and killed hundreds of thousands of people who dared stand up against them. Belgium was particularly brutal, causing the deaths of perhaps millions in the Congo.

Colonialism became increasingly unpopular in the twentieth century as Europeans began appreciate human rights more and more. After the World Wars, the colonies became very expensive and difficult to control too and most colonies were eventually granted independence. These colonies became countries after independence but their first leaders were often the elite appointed by the Europeans during colonialism and they just continued the ways of the Europeans and the people have continued to suffer and fight with each other.

Colonialism was the first example of **globalization**, where countries around the world participated in a joint world economy. However, the terms of trade back then were not at all fair and it was done through force by the Europeans.

America was fortunate because it became independent very early and had very many settlers and few native inhabitants (the Native Americans). The successful former colonies all had many settlers and fewer native peoples. As the lives of Europeans and colonized societies became increasingly connected, decisions made in Europe affected its colonies, and native revolts and other problems or a discovery of a new natural resource in the colonies affected the pockets of Europeans and their thinking. Unfortunately, people often cared more about their own wealth than they do about the rights and welfare of others.

The practice of colonialism in the past has shaped the world today. Former colonies are overwhelmingly poor today, with a small elite class and large poverty-stricken class. In much of Africa, current state political boundaries are the result of the lines drawn by European powers for the boundaries between their colonies. This led to the grouping of historically different tribes with different cultures within the same country, often leading to civil war, government instability, and the rise of **tyrants** and war lords to power.

The following is a listing of some of the European powers and some of their respective former colonies. The list of all former European colonies is extremely long, and this is only a partial selection:

Britain

In Africa: Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, Zanzibar, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Swaziland, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and others

In the Middle East: Iraq, Kuwait, Palestine, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and others

In Asia: India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Nepal, Hong Kong, Singapore, and others.

In the Americas: The United States, Canada, British Honduras (Belize), British Guyana.

France

In Africa: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Togo, and others

In the Middle East: Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Yemen, and Djibouti

In Asia: Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and others.

In the Americas: Canada (Quebec), Louisiana Territory, French Guyana

Germany

In Africa: German East Africa (Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi), German South Africa (Namibia), Cameroons, Togo (until 1918)

Netherlands

In Africa: Parts of South Africa, Ghana, Mauritius, Senegal, Angola

In the Middle East: Iran, parts of Iraq, Yemen

In Asia: Parts of India, Ceylon, Bangladesh, and others

In the Americas: Dutch Guyana (Surinam)

Spain: In the Americas: Western USA and most of South and Central America

In Asia: The Philippines

In Africa: Parts of North Africa (Spanish Sahara)

Portugal: In Africa: Angola, Mozambique

In the Americas: Brazil