



Colonialism

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Colonialism implies domination of people's life and culture. The main goal of colonialism is extraction of economic benefits from the colony. Colonialism results in control over life of natives in political, economic, cultural and social spheres. It is more subtle whereas Imperialism is more formal and aggressive.

Historically, two main types of the colonization can be differentiated.

- **Settler colonialism** is that type of colonialism wherein a large number of the immigrants, often motivated by religious, political, or economic reasons, settle in a new place and dominate the local indigenous population in economic, political as well as social aspects.
- **Exploitation colonialism** involves relatively less number of immigrants and predominantly focuses on exploitation of the resources of the colonial country.

Thus colonialism denotes a set of unequal relationships between the colonial power and the colony, and often between the colonists and the indigenous population; relationships in which the colonists acquire benefits (disproportionally), at the expense of the local population.

Colonialism, Imperialism And New Imperialism

Colonialism, as said earlier, denotes a system in which a country conquers and rules over other regions. It involves exploiting the resources of the conquered country for the benefit of the conqueror.

Imperialism means the ability of a state (or empire) to exert its influence beyond its borders. This influence can be exerted in multiple manners, like colonialism, militarism, cultural hegemony etc. Thus it can be safely argued that **colonialism is a practice and imperialism is the idea driving that practice**.

New Imperialism refers to period of territorial expansion by European powers, the United States, and Japan during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which resulted in subjugation of almost all of Africa and parts of Asia. It was distinct from the earlier phases of imperialistic

expansion, known as old imperialism.

Historically speaking, **new imperialism started with the advent of industrial revolution**. In fact, it was a new strategy of imperialism which was devised by the industrialized countries for maximising their economic benefits. It contrasts with the *old form of imperialism*, in which Colonialism formed the main method of pursuing the imperialistic ambitions and goals.

Causes of Colonialism

- **Discovery of New Lands And Trade Routes**
- **Economic Consideration:** The countries like England, France, Spain and Portugal established their colonies primarily for the economic benefits.
- **Mercantilism:** The policy of Mercantilism was based on the premise that the economic development of the mother country (Metropolis) was most important and the colonies should be governed in such a way that they lead to the benefit of the mother country.
- **European Rivalry:** The exploration and colonization was started by Spain and Portugal. Gradually, other countries like France and England also entered the race. Acquiring new colonies became a thing of national pride. Moreover, due to various economic benefits of colonization, a stage of 'competitive colonialism' started among the European powers.
- **To Spread Christianity:** During the Age of Discovery; the Catholic Church started a major effort to spread Christianity in the New World by converting indigenous peoples. As such, the establishment of Christian missions went simultaneously with the colonizing efforts of European powers such as Spain, France and Portugal.
- **Push Factors:** The enclosure movement, taking land out of cultivation and converting it into pastureland for sheep, was creating a surplus population. Sheep raising, more profitable than traditional agriculture, required fewer labourers. The new lands in America gave these unemployed a place to work.

In Asia, the Europeans met ancient and well populated societies, and hence direct colonization was not feasible. Rather, armed coastal trading posts along maritime trade routes (such as Goa, Malacca and Macau), were established. Nonetheless, in certain areas both Spanish and Portuguese became the effective rulers.

On the contrary, in the Western Hemisphere, the European colonization involved the emigration of large numbers of settlers, soldiers and administrators intent on owning land and exploiting the relatively pristine landscape. The result was that the colonization in Asia was indirect while the colonization of Americas was direct (i.e., actual settlement).

European Colonies In India: Vasco da Gama's discovery of a new sea route to India in 1498 started the process of direct Indo-European commerce. The Portuguese soon set up trading-posts in Goa, Daman, Diu and Bombay. The next to arrive were the Dutch, the English and finally the French. The internal conflicts among Indian Kingdoms, the technological superiority of Europeans and financial benefits of commerce enabled the European traders to gradually gain political and military influence and appropriate lands. Although all European powers controlled various regions of southern and eastern India, ultimately they lost all their territories in India to the British, with the exception of the few outposts, like French of Pondichéry, the Dutch port in Travancore, and the Portuguese colonies of Goa, Daman, and Diu.

Impact of Colonialism

- **Columbian Exchange:** The term Columbian Exchange refers to the widespread exchange of plants, animals, culture, human populations, technology, and ideas that occurred between the new world (Americas) and the Old World (Eurasia) in the 15th and 16th centuries, as a result of European colonization and trade.
- **Slave Trade:** To effectively utilize the resources, colonizers needed immense amount of labour. During the initial years, the European settlers met labour requirements by enslaving the native populations. However, the decline in the native population led to importing slaves from Africa which emerged as a lucrative alternative.
- **Boost to Mercantilism:** Mercantilism, in a way, was both the cause as well as the effect of colonialism. Mercantile economic policies were definitely an impetus for the start of colonization. But subsequently, the benefits due to colonial exploitation further reinforced the ideology of mercantile capitalism and augmented its spread across Europe. As a result these countries saw very rapid increase in trade volume while colonies suffered proportionally.