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Mains Practice Questions

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Q. Differentiate between colonialism and imperialism. What were the reasons behind their rise? (250 words)

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Approach:

- Introduce by giving the definition for the two terms in the introduction.
- Differentiate between the two and give reasons behind their rise.
- Conclude writing its consequences on the colonies and indigenous people.

Introduction

- Imperialism is understood as a policy of a country in which that said country influences other countries or territories through military force, as well as other means of power..
- Colonialism is defined as a practice in which a power sets up colonies or settlements elsewhere (in other countries or territories) for the political and economic benefit of the colonizing country.

Body

Difference between colonialism and imperialism:

- Though both the words underline suppression of the other, Colonialism is where one nation assumes control over the other and Imperialism refers to political or economic control, either formally or informally. In simple words, colonialism can be thought to be a practice and imperialism as the idea driving the practice.
- Colonialism is a term where a country conquers and rules over other regions. It means exploiting the resources of the conquered country for the benefit of the conqueror. Imperialism means creating an empire, expanding into the neighbouring regions and expanding its dominance far.
- Colonialism can altogether alter the social structure, physical structure and economics of a region. It is quite normal that in the long run, the traits of the conqueror are inherited by the conquered.
- Colonialism is a term used to describe the settlement of places like India, Australia, North America, Algeria, New Zealand and Brazil, which were all controlled by the Europeans. Imperialism, on the other hand is described where a foreign government governs a territory without significant settlement. The American domination of Puerto Rico and the Philippines can be cited as examples of Imperialism.
- In Colonialism, one can see great movement of people to the new territory and living as permanent settlers. Though they lead the life as permanent settlers, they still maintain allegiance to their mother country. Imperialism is just exercising power over the conquered regions either through sovereignty or indirect mechanisms of control.

- Coming to the origin of the two, Imperialism has a longer history than Colonialism. While the history of colonialism dates back to 15th century, Imperialism has its origins dating back to the Romans.

The reasons behind their rise:

- **Economic Reasons:**
 - By 1870, it became necessary for European industrialized nations to expand their markets globally in order to sell products that they could not sell domestically on the continent.
 - Businessmen and bankers had excess capital to invest, and foreign investments offered the incentive of greater profits, despite the risks.
 - The need for cheap labor and a steady supply of raw materials, such as oil, rubber, and manganese for steel, required that the industrial nations maintain firm control over unexplored areas.
- **Military and Political Reasons:**
 - Leading European nations also felt that colonies were crucial to military power, national security, and nationalism.
 - Military leaders claimed that a strong navy was necessary in order to become a great power. Thus, naval vessels needed military bases around the world to take on coal and supplies.
- **Humanitarian and Religious Goals:**
 - Many Westerners believed that Europe should civilize their little brothers beyond the seas. According to this view, non-whites would receive the blessings of Western civilization, including medicine, law, and Christianity.
 - This was inspired from the “The White Man’s Burden” theory.
- **Exploratory:** They did it for the sense of adventure. Invariably, imperial explorers sought to discover, map, and claim territory before their imperial competition did, partly for national and personal glory and partly to serve the imperialist goal of expansion.

Conclusion

- The consequences of Western imperialist expansion are quite complex and difficult to simplify.
- The economic effects were harmful and indigenous people saw a foreign culture imposed on their own.
- However, the Western scientific and technological progress benefited directly or indirectly the colonized populations resulted in the improvement of health conditions; Access to education for the native elite and Construction of railways, ports etc.