

Colonialism and Neocolonialism

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover the following topics:

1. Colonialism
2. Neocolonialism

1. COLONIALISM

European **colonialism** gained momentum in the 16th century and lasted up until the 20th century. European explorers, from countries wealthy enough to send out explorers, started to venture out on voyages all over the world, out of curiosity about what else existed beyond their realms. They were looking for riches to bring home.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** You're likely familiar with one these well-known voyages. For instance, Columbus in 1492 when he discovered the Americas.

These explorers would come into contact with many different societies that they weren't familiar with, or even realize existed. These societies represented radically different ways of living and therefore, the Europeans thought that the people were much less civilized, that they were inferior.



THINK ABOUT IT

How did colonialism impact the Native Americans? The first European settlers in America thought, "The native population is just sitting on all of this natural wealth. They've got all of these resources they're not using--they don't even know how to use them because they're backwards. At least, they certainly couldn't make what we can make with them. However, we can use them, so let's take them." This is also how the Spanish treated people in South America around this same time.

Essentially, this is what happened with colonialism. The explorers realized the extent of natural bounty that existed in other places that wasn't being used, in their estimation, so they decided to set up a colony and establish a settlement, in order to start extracting the resources. In this manner, they could enrich themselves back home. In this fashion, territory around the world was acquired by European powers of the day, like Britain, Spain, France, the Netherlands, and Portugal, who went out and established colonies for the purpose of extracting resources, using them, and enriching themselves back home.

IN CONTEXT

This type of historical colonialism has left a mark that you can still see today. It's the reason why people in Brazil speak Portuguese, and Latin American countries speak Spanish. Areas of North Africa--specifically Algeria--have a strong French presence.

It's also why Christianity is the dominant religion in the world--not because Christianity was inherently superior. People defend Christianity and point to the fact that it's all over the globe. In reality, it's all over the globe because the colonizers took it with them and implanted it into these societies where it wasn't there before. Therefore, it gained a foothold and today, it is the widest religion in the world.

By setting up colonies and patterns of economic trading--resources going back and forth between the motherland and the colonies--they set up economic roots in these colonies and, in the process, connected the entire world into one economic system that enriched the colonizing countries at the expense of the colonized.

You can still see the vestiges of colonial expansion today in inequality and dependency theory, which argues that rich nations of the world, at the same time that they enriched and developed themselves through colonial expansion, underdeveloped the nations that they colonized and integrated them into the global system in a subordinate and dependent position.



LEARN MORE

Frantz Fanon, an Algerian, wrote a book called *The Wretched of the Earth*, which is essentially a psychoanalytic analysis of the colonial situation. He looked at the colonizers and the colonized and theorized the colonial situation psychologically from the minds of colonized.



TERM TO KNOW

Colonialism

When a country expands and takes over another country for economic gain.

2. NEOCOLONIALISM

Fast forward to today, and you will see what is called neocolonialism. Neocolonialism is global power derived from economic exploitation by multinational corporations instead of nation-states.



THINK ABOUT IT

Think about any well-known powerful, huge, multinational corporations. Where are their operations located? They have their operations all over the world, with different areas of the corporation located in different parts of the world.

Corporations today don't owe any national allegiance, meaning they're not die-hard American or die-hard Chinese, for example. They don't owe any specific countries anything because they operate all over the globe, and they're going to try to operate wherever it's going to be the cheapest for them--where they can hire the cheapest labor, where the environmental regulations are the least, where they're going to have to pay the fewest taxes, etc. Corporations will move about the globe to do this, and in the process, they can derive power and enrich themselves.



BIG IDEA

Neocolonialism is the basic idea that global power is derived from economic exploitation by multinational corporations rather than nation-states.



BRAINSTORM

There's a lot of discussion in social sciences regarding whether or not the nation-state is losing power. Well, is it? What does the nation-state mean on the global stage relative to corporations? It's interesting to think about presidential politics and rhetoric, when they talk about bringing jobs back and creating jobs. Do they really have power to do that? Are corporations the ones with more power in these situations?



TERM TO KNOW

Neocolonialism

Global power based on economic exploitation by multinational corporations.



SUMMARY

Today you learned about **colonialism**, when a country expands and takes over another country for economic gain, and **neocolonialism**, which describes global power based on economic exploitation by multinational corporations.

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Zach Lamb.



TERMS TO KNOW

Colonialism

When a country expands and takes over another country for economic gain.

Neocolonialism

Global power based on economic exploitation by multinational corporations.