

Colonialism vs imperialism assignment



Throughout history, the borders of nations have expanded, decreased, and in some cases vanished from existence. This state of perpetual geographic revision can be attributed to the desire of expansion and influence inherent in most countries. As a result of this constant appetite for power, the ideas of imperialism and colonialism have been recurring themes throughout history. The two terms go hand in hand, and seldom is one mentioned without the other which leaves me curious as to why there are two words for the same thing.

More importantly, why are we still talking about these concepts? In modern times, are these terms really still applicable to foreign relations? Both apply to one country imposing its will on another, however imperialism actually has a broader definition than colonialism. According to D. K. Flophouse, imperialism can, "... Be regarded as an umbrella word comprehending the whole gamut of relations between a dominant and a subservient society. " (Flophouse 1). Imperialism can be considered as more of an idea than a practice.

As Marauder Sings puts it, " A simple way to distinguish these two is to think of colonialism as practice and imperialism as the idea driving the practice. (Sings). Colonialism refers more specifically to the exercise of " economic, political and ideological exploitation of a development gap between [two countries]. " (Reinhardt 1). As Charles Reynolds puts it, " A colonial relationship is established in which indigenous peoples coexist somewhat uneasily with incomers... Which differs from imperialism in the sense that it requires colonization of a foreign territory whereas " imperialism does not necessarily entail the colonization of tributary territories. " (Reynolds 1). The

distinction that authors typically use when deciding what to label imperialism and what to label colonialism is that imperialism does not directly imply that the stronger country has the intention to alienate the weaker. Wolfgang Reinhardt says that, " To be a colonialist, rule must be experienced as alien rule... (Reinhardt 1), and that, " complete assimilation ends its colonialist character. " (Reinhardt 1). The purpose of colonialism is to eventually assimilate the foreign country with that of the invading one, in essence claiming and converting that country for the benefit of the aggressor. Imperialism on the other hand is simply, " the tendency of one society or state to control another, by whatever means, and for whatever purpose. " (Flophouse 1).

Imperialism can mean that a country is imposing its will on another weaker country for any reason, whether it be political, social, economic, or militaristic; not specifically to claim and convert that territory, and not necessarily even requiring invasion. I believe that based on these definitions, colonialism and imperialism are still prevalent in today's international community. From increasing tariffs to influence another nation's actions to invading a country to restructure a failing government, other countries do in fact influence the actions of weaker countries for their own benefit through both imperialism and colonialism.