

Imperialism involves
the practice



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Currently, the United States of America is one of the greatest superpowers in the world, needless to say the USA and strong nations alike worked diligently to gain a dominant identity. The preceding rhetoric around powerful nations such as the USA and China is witnessed beyond one's own perceived superiority (CITE 1). Thus, begging the question, how did such countries rise in power amongst all other competing groups? Peering into history, it is shown that countries gained importance through the dominion of smaller territories, their economy and political state- this idea is commonly referred to as imperialism.

In this paper, I will argue that the effects of imperialism have been more harmful in nature than helpful. I will do this by analyzing a few historically relevant imperialist events and discussing their positive and negative reverberations.

As previously stated, imperialism involves the practice of gaining indirect or direct control over a territory through the acquisition of land, or economic and political control. An illustration of imperialism can be seen through the explorer Christopher Columbus. Columbus set out to find more trading ground with Asia, but ended up lost at sea. In 1492, Columbus landed in Hispaniola, now known as Haiti. During his voyage, he spent a great deal of time in Haiti and the Caribbean. He was then directed to the America's, here he was able to negotiate the treaty of Tordesillas. The treaty of Tordesillas was established between the Spanish and the Portuguese to divide the recently discovered lands during his voyage. Through this treaty the Europeans were able to conquer the New World (North America, South America, and the Caribbean Islands) with tactics such as trading cigars

coated with unfamiliar diseases, and the pillage of native resources such as sugarcane, cocoa, corn and potatoes(CITE 2).

Through the lens of imperialism, it can be argued that smaller nations sought to gain from larger nations. An example of this is the introduction of practical advancements such as roads, canals, railways, printing press, schools and new religions. The creation of ports is an illustration of how smaller nations gained from the advancements of larger nations. In particular, global trade helped boost the economies by providing manufactures with a practical way of accessing resources they may need, thereby enhancing production and the sale of such products. In China, tobacco was once perceived as a luxury for the high class. However, after the initiation of open trade between Europe and China, tobacco became much more accessible to all citizens. As a result, tobacco manufactures are able to make more products to sell to the general public (CITE 3).

Other positive effects of imperialism through the interaction of more developed nations with less developed nations include improved medical care, better methods of sanitation, and introduction of new farming methods. Subsequently leading to modernization through global interaction and the sharing of cultural and religious practices, resulting in a national identity and the knowledge of the existence of others'. Arguably, through imperialism more nations developed an improved their standard of living; less death and and a better quality of life.

Contrarily, imperialism has had long lasting negative effects.

To begin, colonizers typically worked indigenous people for cheap labor with limited freedom. In other words, the dominant nation seeking total political, economic or territorial control forced the less developed nation to listen to their commands at a less than fair price. The less developed native populations were often exploited and taken advantage of. Case in point, the transatlantic slave trade. During this time millions of West Africans were forced into slavery, and shipped to nations such as Brazil and the Caribbeans as goods for trade (CITE 3). Another negative effect derived from imperialism is the forceful introduction to the institution of religion; during the European pillage of Africa, many Africans were forced to adapt Christianity.

Further, a vital goal for imperialist powers was to gain territory, many did not take into account the natural borders that were set in place before their arrival. After gaining territory, new boundaries caused cultural, and religious angst between new neighbors. For example, in Iraq animosity between Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims, and Kurds surfaced after man-made borders were drawn by the British causing ethnic and religious strife that continues to fester. Another example can be seen during the imperialist acquisition of Africa, commanding powers insufficiently prepared their colonies for self-governance resulting in instability that can be seen today.

As seen throughout history, imperialism is a key part of modern European history, resulting in the creation of the world today. However, as previously stated, the negative effects are more prevalent and harmful than the positive effects are helpful. Positive effects include the addition to quality of life through enhanced medical practices, better farming methods and

increased food production, schools and more. However, it is argued that the positive effects do not negate the negative effects.

These negative effects include, the forceful and unfair nature of acquisition by over-working less powerful nations with limited freedom and the continuing animosity between made-made regions through haphazardly drawn borders. Further the assertive manner in which certain regions were taught to believe in another religion that the Europeans deemed as superior. The consequences of the negative impacts are arguably much worse because there still exists a struggle for perceived imperial dominance. Even though the practice of imperialism has drastically changed today, its adaptation to the modern world is still distinguishable. In current media, you see two world leaders making it a point to state that their nuclear button is much larger in size- illustrating their desire for dominion or power over the one other.