

Effects of western global expansion after 1500 c.e

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Effects of Western global expansion after 1500 C. E. The history of the world since 1500 has been full of tragedy, but it has also been full of hope. In this essay, the Age of Discovery is not reduced to the Age of Destruction. In fact, this period in history laid the groundwork for much of today's global prosperity.

The world has changed enormously between 1500 and the current day. Much of what we enjoy in this day and age is directly connected to the remarkable changes that occurred during this period. Many of today's nation-states were born during this time. Some have called it the Age of Discovery, while others have been more gloomy and pessimistic calling it the Age of Destruction. This is too harsh. While negative things certainly happened during this time, wonderful things happened too. New cultures were introduced to one another. Although this process started unequally, it was the beginning of globalization, a process that has brought great prosperity to all parts of the world.

It is useful to consider the voyage that kicked off this whole process. We have it from the hand of Christopher Columbus himself, the predominant view of Europeans of this time:

It is now seventeen years since I came to serve these princes with the Enterprise of the Indies. They made me pass eight of them in discussion, and at the end rejected it as a thing of jest. Nevertheless, I persisted therein... Over there I have placed under their sovereignty more land than there is in Africa and Europe, and more than 1, 700 islands... In seven years I, by the divine will, made that conquest (Morison, 576)

One man could conquer all of this territory and bring back to Spain all the riches of these islands. It is an extraordinary story. However, Spain was not <https://assignbuster.com/effects-of-western-global-expansion-after-1500-ce/>

the only country involved: its efforts were mostly limited to the Caribbean (Paine, xvi). It was driven in large part by the changes Europe was undergoing. First, came discovery, and then came exploitation. Mercantilism developed in Europe in the 18th century (Duiker, et al, 320). This was one of the dominant economic doctrines of the time. It led European powers to seek out new markets across the world. These were often less developed countries that had some sort of resource the Europeans could exploit. The wealth generated from these conquests allowed Europeans to build massive public works such as the French palace at Versailles (326). While this was clearly a form of greed at the time, these buildings were truly beautiful. It is easy to argue that this period in world history was filled only with calumny and misery. However, much of the economic activity at the time laid the groundwork for the current global economy, which provides so much prosperity to us all. Certain countries needed to become rich so they could develop the financial infrastructure necessary to ensure everyone could participate in the global economy. There were moments when the rich countries took advantage of poor ones, but these episodes should not colour the glory and excitement of much of this period in world history.

The Age of Discovery was an extraordinary time. The world was developing into the modern mode, which we enjoy so much. It would be wrong to characterize 500 years of history as being solely dedicated to destruction. Much was created during these centuries.

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