

# UNIT 12 – UPSC - World History

## Colonization and De-colonization

In all parts of the world, Historians had great interest in the colonial past, decolonization, and post-colonial theory which offers significant challenges for history didactics and the teaching of history. It has been observed that there are massive transnational migration movements and the increase in the number of culturally and religiously diverse states which have stemmed from the processes of decolonization and globalization. It means that the history of colonialism and decolonization as well as post-colonial perspectives have become important elements of historical dialogue and perception.



**Colonization:** Colonialism is a political-economic fact whereby different nations discovered, conquered, settled, and exploited large zones of the world. The term is originated from the Latin word *colere*, which means to "to inhabit" (Rockman, 2003). Past reports indicated that colonialism has been practiced throughout history and all over the world. Generally, colonialism happens when people from one terrain establish or acquire, maintain, and develop colonies in another region. In colonialism, the metropole or colonizing power claims dominance over the colony.

Colonialism is a procedure of temporally extended domination by people over other people and as such part of the historical cosmos of forms of intergroup domination, subjugation, oppression, and exploitation (Horvath 1972). From a world-systems viewpoint, much of the history of the capitalist world-economy is a history of colonialism, consisting of repeated and more or less successful attempts by the core to create a periphery, to control it politically in order to exploit it economically ( Sanderson 2005: 186f). Both the capitalist and pre-capitalist world-systems have had colonial empires (Chase-Dunn/Hall 1997). Colonialism brings a totally new existence to the colonies. Cultural which are unfamiliar to one another are brought together and forced to interact and coexist. The subjugation of lands and forceful coexistence of peoples of different backgrounds (as a result of the conquest) with different beliefs and philosophies has brought about many changes, both negative and positive, especially in the colonies.

Records have shown that the age of modern colonialism started around 1500, following the European discoveries of a sea route around Africa's southern coast (1488) and of America (1492). With these events, sea power shifted from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic and to the developing

nation-states of Portugal, Spain, the Dutch Republic, France, and England. Often, colonization is determined by a desire for economic development. In the period of sixteenth century, European colonization of Africa had significant role in development of European economy. European colonization strengthened because Europeans had just developed galleons or ships that could navigate more easily all the way to Africa. There was easy access to foreign lands which encouraged European aristocracies and merchants to discover new terrains in an effort to obtain raw materials and develop new markets. Obtaining raw materials from overseas lands led to the Industrial Revolution, and the practice of bondage. This created a new source of labour power for Europeans. This type of colonialism promoted European economies but at the same time, it had harmful consequences for African economies. Colonized terrains were forced to depend on colonizers for trade. Local institutions and political structures were dismantled and substituted with ones imposed by colonial influences.

These nations extended and colonized throughout the world through discovery, conquest, and settlement, spreading European institutions and culture. Today, Colonialism has been recognized with rule over peoples of different race occupying lands separated by salt water from the imperial centre. Especially, it indicates direct political control by European states or states established by Europeans, as the United States or Australia, over peoples of other races, particularly over Asians and Africans. It has been documented that the most remarkable colonial powers were Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark, whose shared empires covered at various times the whole of North, Central and South America, Africa, Australia, much of Indonesia, the countries lying in the Levant, much of the Indian subcontinent as well as most of the countries lying in between. In short, most of the world. Germany as a colonial power is often considered a minor aspect of Europe's imperialist development.

Other features of the "colonial situation" are, domination of an alien minority, asserting racial and cultural superiority, over a materially inferior native majority, contact between a machine-oriented civilization with Christian origins, a powerful economy, and a rapid rhythm of life and a non-Christian civilization that lacks machines and is marked by a backward economy and a slow rhythm of life, and the imposition of the first civilization upon the second.

## **Advantages of Colonialism**

**Religion:** Colonialism has assisted to spread religion especially the Christian religion. The European missionaries brought Christian religion to their colonies and communicated the people of the colonies the religion very well. In the process of learning the religion the colonial masters also made the people attain new skills. This brought about a development in the people as they were being liberated from the illiteracy which had kept them in the dark for many years. The initiation of the Christian religion brought many modifications to the colonies. For example, in Southern Nigeria, Christianity helped stop the killing of twins as the religion addressed equality and encouraged education for all people.

**Modernization and technological advancement:** Colonialism had contributed in modernization of underdeveloped regions. Progressive technological equipment and amenities necessary for improvements in medical and healthcare services, building of railroads and other developments in transportation, modern education, all have helped in the development of the colonies. These developments have improved the status of the colonies internationally. The improvements in

education have provided opportunities for competition in different disciplines like literature, mathematics, art and science. This is apparent in Africa with people like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiongo and other communities.

**Discovery of natural resources:** Colonisations helps in exploring natural resources which was due to the provision of new technology known to the colonies by their colonial leaders. The use of new technology made investigation of natural resources easier and more efficient. This resulted in the development and progress of the colonies. It also increases job opportunities for the people, even though they were not well paying jobs, and this added to the experience of the people as they acquired knowledge and learned new skills which is beneficial to them. This meant cheap labour for the colonial masters.

**Expansion of land:** Colonialism also brought about the enlargement of land for their colonies. For example, before colonialism, there was no terrain known as Nigeria. There were only towns and villages, which were more or less restricted to their areas, living on their own. With the initiation of colonization, colonial masters expanded the land for all ethnic groups, towns and villages. Members of any ethnic group can now move to and live in any part of the country and call the place home. **Language:** The implementation of the language of the colonial masters by the colonies have promoted unity to an extent in most multilingual and multicultural nations. It is apparent in Nigeria which has well over five hundred languages. Since no language is considered superior to the other, it would be difficult for any of the native languages to be made the lingua franca. The adoption of English language has made things easier for Nigerians as the language is foreign and does not belong to any particular ethnic group or people in the country (Schaefer, 2008).

## Disadvantages of Colonialism

**Unfamiliar system of government:** The colonial masters brought new and unfamiliar systems of government which the inhabitants were not familiar with. These systems of government gave less importance to, and had less regard for the systems of government of the colonies. The methods of ruling which were introduced to the colonies were completely different from what the natives were used to.

**Loss and destruction of culture and land:** Colonialism contributed vastly to the loss and destruction of cultural norms and values of inhabitants. First of all the native languages of the colonies were made lower to the languages of the colonial masters. The mode of dressing of the people changed. Natives of the colonies started to dress and speak like the colonial masters as they were made to believe that their colonial masters were superior human beings.

## The Impact of Colonialism

There is great impacts of colonialism in the political, economic, and social spheres.

### **The Political Impact of Colonialism:**

In the political area, colonialism affects the pre-colonial leaders, although domination took different forms. One impact of colonialism was the political control of regions having no central government or, where centralization already existed, the foreign take-over or domination of pre-colonial central government (Bockstette, Chanda, and Putterman 2002). The extent of political

control was different from colony to colony, and often within colony from region to region (Bergesen and Schoenberg 1980). Many writers differentiate between an allegedly British style of indirect rule and an allegedly French style of direct administration. According to Herbst, British faithfulness to indirect rule is overstated and "the notion of a single-minded colonial approach to ruling Africa is therefore unsupported by the evidence" (2000: 82). Coleman draws these styles as polar extremes of a continuum instead of as contradiction and puts them in standpoint. "In practice these forms have not been applied consistently either over time or to the different traditional authority systems within single territories" (1960: 265). Where there was the most effective indirect rule, the political incorporation was more problematic and the tension between old and new elites were more obvious. In contrast, where direct rule was most effective, the political integration has been easier and less clogged by old elites. Lange (2004) analysed the variation in British colonialism and debated that direct rule provided an administrative structure based on formal rules and had a centralized legal-administrative structure with a formal chain of command that interrelated the diverse state actors throughout the colony to the central colonial administration in the metropole. Indirect rule encouraged local tyranny by allowing traditional rulers to be "rent-seekers extraordinaire." Consequently, "the colonial state in indirectly ruled colonies lacked the competences to implement policy outside of the capital city and often had no option for following policy other than compulsion" (Lange 2004).

In places where colonialists had to manage with high mortality rates, they established less and created extractive institutions (Acemoglu et al. 2001, 2002). In contrast to settler colonies, these extractive institutions concentrate power and are prone to expropriation of property. Grier stated that Institutions as educational facilities and infrastructure are more established where colonization lasted longer (1999). She also highlights constitutional differences within the British Empire. La Porta et al. (2008) are less concerned with constitutional differences between the areas ruled by one colonial power, but rather between different colonial powers. According to this investigation, the legal systems established in British colonies are based on common law, which allows less state interference than the French legal system established in other colonies. In between the two are the German, Scandinavian, and Socialist legal systems.

### **The Economic Impact of Colonialism:**

The main urgings for economic impact of colonialism are the 'drain of wealth,' expropriation (mainly of land), the control over production and trade, the exploitation of natural resources, and the improvement of infrastructure. Tomlinson summarizes about India that By the last quarter of the nineteenth century India was the largest purchaser of British exports, a major employer of British civil servants at high salaries, the provider of half of the Empire's military might, all paid for from local revenues, and a significant recipient of British capital (Tomlinson 1993, Pp: 13). Colonialism led to a considerable outflow of financial resources. It is best recognised in the case of British India, where a controversy between Indian historians and protectors of British colonialism still has not been settled. The so called "Home Charges," the official transfers of funds by the colonial government to Britain between 1858 and 1947, consisted mainly of debt service, pensions, India Office expenses in Britain, purchases of military items and railway equipment.

### **The Social Impact of Colonialism:**

With the development of colonialism in India, new middle class also arose which consisted of people who get a modern education and would become interested in public services. Another significant group which emerged was a group of trained professionals such as doctors, lawyers,

teachers, journalists. This group became very important in society and was able to develop because of the British influence on education in the country following the defeat of the British East India Company. This class was more liberal in its viewpoint because it drew its position and strength from professional competence rather than hereditary privilege (History Tuition 2014). It is established from reviewing the colonialism process that colonialism is the strategy of one nation who use its powers over other terrains, by extending and occupying the other territories through colonization, which is the process of controlling and inhabiting other territories. In the 18th and 19th centuries, during the industrial revolution, European countries became powerful and wealthier through industrialization as the other countries outside of Europe became weaker since they failed to industrialize. Colonialism greatly impact on the cultural, political, religious, economic and social aspects in the colony (Schaefer, 2008). After World War II, colonial systems were pulled to bits in a process called decolonization.

## Decolonization

Decolonisation is the downfall of colonialism, where a nation establishes and maintains its supremacy over dependent terrains. Decolonization is described as the collapse of colonialism, or the claim of a previously colonized people for independence and self-determination. In part, decolonization was the consequence of independence movements in colonized territories. It was also the result of an intended economic decision made by colonial authorities. The cost of maintaining colonial empires had begun to surpass their value for the European powers. The Oxford English Dictionary explains decolonization as "the withdrawal from its colonies of a colonial power; the acquisition of political or economic independence by such colonies." Etemad (2000) affirmed that decolonization led to emigration of colony-born Europeans thereby reducing the amount of human capital in the newly independent nation.

Other experts define decolonization as a polity's movement from a status of political dependence or subordination to a status of formal autonomy or sovereignty. In modern practice, it is generally supposed that the regal or metropolitan centre is physically separated from the dependency and that the two societies are culturally distinct. The term, Decolonization refers specifically to the fragmentation of western overseas empires and their replacement by sovereign states in the Americas, Asia, and Africa. It can be assumed politically (attaining independence, autonomous home rule, union with the metropole or another state), or culturally (removal of pernicious colonial effects). The term refers predominantly to the dismantlement, in the years after World War II, of the colonial empires established earlier to World War I all over the world.

The United Nations Special Committee on decolonization has specified that in the process of decolonization there is no alternative to the colonizer allowing a process of self-determination but in practice decolonization may involve either peaceful rebellion or national liberation wars by pro-independence groups. It may be internal or involve the interference of foreign supremacies acting individually or through international bodies such as the United Nations. Many examples of decolonization can be found in the literatures of Thucydides, but there have been several particularly active periods of decolonization in modern times. These include the breakup of the Spanish Empire in the 19th century; of the German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian Empires following World War I; of the British, French, Dutch, Japanese, Portuguese, Belgian and Italian colonial empires following World War II; and of the Soviet Union (successor to the Russian

Empire) following the Cold War. It is shown in studies that decolonization refers to the ability to view and discuss non-European cultures from an impartial, non-western viewpoint.

There are many ways by which decolonization can occur. Most commonly, the dependency becomes a new independent state, a political entity recognized in the international field as independent of other states and as possessing final jurisdiction over a defined territory and population. Less often, decolonization may occur through the dependency's full incorporation into an existing polity, such that it is no longer separate and subordinate.

In historical records, it is not clearly mentioned that when decolonization has occurred. Puerto Rico's relation to the United States can be defined as one of colonial dependency or as free association. In the 1960s, Portugal claimed to have no colonies, only foreign territories formally combined into a unitary Portuguese state (Nogueira 1963). And where political relations are not challenged, the absence of overt conflict makes it problematic to know when independence has been achieved. There were three major elements that played massive role in this decolonization process. First was the colonized peoples' hunger for independence, secondly was the Second World War itself which established that colonial powers were no longer indestructible, and thirdly was the new focus on anti-colonialism in United Nations. The first upsurge of decolonization started with the liberation of Britain's thirteen continental colonies as the United States of America. The French Revolution touched off a slave uprising that led finally to the independence of the French colony of Saint Domingue as Haiti. Portuguese Brazil and Spanish Central and South America became self-governing after the Napoleonic Wars, which had cut Latin America off from the Iberian peninsula.

While the first period of decolonization was restricted to the Americas. In twentieth-century, decolonization was global. It encompassed the freedom of most of the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia and Australasia, the Middle East, Africa, and the Caribbean. Between the world wars, some of Britain's settler colonies and a number of insecurely held protectorates became fully independent. After World War II, the major Asian colonies such as India, Indonesia, Indochina, and the Philippines gained independence. This change rapidly speeded during the 1960s, which saw the decolonization of approximately all of Africa. In the decade of the 1980s, nearly all Western colonies had become self-governing or had been fully integrated into sovereign states. One important difference between the two periods of decolonization has to do with who sought independence. Early American decolonization were creole revolutions, as the offspring of European settlers sought political independence from their mother country. The American Revolution and the Spanish Wars for Independence were political instead of social revolutions. Slave revolt in Haiti provided the sole exception, to the revulsion of creole nationalists as well as loyalists elsewhere.

On the contrary, twentieth-century decolonization was deep-rooted in aboriginal rather than creole movements for independence, as decolonization came to mean autonomy from racially foreign rule. After World War II, settler subgroups opposed decolonization, since national independence spelled an end to their privileged political, economic, and social position. Only in South Africa did a racialist minority government survived decolonization.

The first and second influences of decolonization also varied importantly terms of violence involved. Early decolonization in the America was gained through military battle between settler and imperial forces. Wars for independence fumed in Britain's thirteen continental colonies, in Spanish Central and South America, and in Haiti. Only in Portuguese Brazil was independence attained without a battle because Brazil was richer and more populated than Portugal.

During the twentieth century, prolonged wars for independence were fought in Indochina, Indonesia, Algeria, and Angola. But these were the exceptions to the rule. Most colonies became independent without organized violence between the imperial state and colonial nationalists. In much of Africa, imperial powers practically abandoned colonies at the first sign of antagonism to the colonial regime. In the middle of 1960s, decolonization had become a rather routine activity for many imperial powers, often attained through institutionalized expressions of popular will.

Decolonization has greatly affected on the economies of the newly formed states. It was observed that newly independent African states had to improve an economic system. Furthermore, even though the previous colonies were now formally independent, they were still rather dependent on the West for support in developing economic and political structures. Therefore, western companies still had a significant amount of control over the new states. Newly independent states borrowed money from the Western countries in order to fund their own development which created a new system of debt. For decades, this debt has been politically not possible for many countries to pay off and still exists. The consequences of decolonization for more general notions of international supremacy or mistreatment are strongly contested. Dependency and world systems thinkers visualized decolonization as producing modification in the mere form, but not the content, of core-periphery relations (Chase-Dunn and Rubinson 1979). The main debate is that contact between more and less developed economies tends generally to strengthen the differential between them, even in the absence of explicit political controls. Dependency on overseas capital has been contended to slow long-term economic development (Bornschier et al. 1978) and more generally to shape the political and economic structure of the dependent society (Cardoso and Faletto 1979).

Regardless of these apprehensions, it is established that decolonization involves a fundamental change in the structures regulating international exchange, especially in the post-World War II period. Contemporary states are equipped with broadly accepted rights to control economic activity within their boundaries, including rights to nationalize foreign-owned industries and renegotiate contracts with multinational corporations (Lipson 1985). Third World nations mobilize around these rights (Krasner 1985), and the negative impact of economic dependency seems to fall when the bordering state is strong (Delacroix and Ragin 1981).

To summarize, the process of colonialism typically involved the relocation of populace to a new terrain, where the arrivals lived as permanent settlers while maintaining political fidelity to their country of origin. Colonialism is a practice of authority, which involves the suppression of one people to another. Decolonization is the opposing of colonialism. In this process, one nation establishes itself self-governing and separate from the state it had emerged from.