

What is Imperialism? Its History, Spread and Impact

Posted on March 2, 2018

Imperialism is derived from the Latin word *Imperium*, meaning Supreme power or Sovereignty or simply rule. It came into normal usage in late 1870 in Britain with a negative connotation. This term is associated with Western political and economic dominance in Asian and African regions. Imperialism is defined as the act of a country, empire, or state extending or dominating another state by the use of power by extending its territories. It also includes the factor of exploiting, looting, and plundering the colonized states and their resources and people. Imperialism leads to colonialism.

Imperialism operates when a powerful or strong nation tries to dominate the cultural life, politics, economy, and/or trade of a weak nation or region. After the era of the emerging industrial revolution in the late 18's or 19th century, imperialism became an essential practice for looting and capturing the resources of the weak nations by the powerful ones. It became common practice for European nations to loot the best sources of raw materials for their manufacturing products.[1]

"Industrialized countries of the West sought to expand their economies by obtaining raw materials which could be transported back to factories, turned into manufacturing goods, and shipped back to the colonies' markets for sale"[2]

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Imperialism is considered an act of moral reprehension because it is, in modern times, used as an act of controlling and degrading the financial and foreign policies of the oppressors. Never in the history of mankind did anyone see, hear, or read about a mission of civilizing a nation as Europeans did. The traces of imperialism link back to times when Spain and Portugal partitioned the world by signing the Treaty of Tordesillas on 7th June 1494, which they later clearly declared as an act of hegemony.

Chinese imperialism is also famous for its expansion. Similarly, we can trace its operations in the late 1870s in Asia and Africa, when the British came to the Subcontinent and Africa. In the name of the so-called White Man's burden to civilize the whole world or a bunch of all those countries and states that for them were neither civilized nor undeveloped. In the Continent, they came under the excuse to trade as the East India Company and then slowly invaded and plundered the whole continent.[3]

Imperialism has played a very much of its important role in the major regions of the world, including Asia, specifically China, Japan, Assyria, Egypt, Rome, France, Ottoman Empire. Also in the era of the Mongols, imperialism is considered to be the fundamental component of their conquests and powerful invasions. [Genghis Khan](#) and some other famous warlords used it as a tactic to preempt other weak states. Some historically recognized that the wave of imperialism also hit Muslim states and regions.

Jerusalem, currently known as Palestine, and Kashmir are also counted as those states that are extremely affected by the invasion of the more powerful neighboring states. [4]

Che Guevara's famous speech on behalf of the Cuban Government at the Ministerial meeting is also proof of the consequences faced by the Cuban people from imperialism,

"Cuba is on the alert, distinguished delegates, because she knows that imperialism would perish enveloped in flames...The situation of the world is intense".[5]

Not only Asia and Africa, but also some parts of Europe had a part in Imperialism and colonization. North America, which is now known as Canada, had also faced the impacts and consequences of Imperialism in its time. There were many poems and stories written by those Red Indians who were the natives and are considered to be the natives of the region, depicting the harsh and brutal treatment of the colonizers with the colorized ones.

However, imperialism is normally used by the more powerful political lords or states to forcefully invade the regions that are either politically or financially unstable or are considered to be nations that are not relying on or flourishing under a unified law or system. These are the basic or most commonly used tactics by the powerful nations against the weak ones. Not only financial or political, but also cultural and economic invasion and suppression are part of Imperialism. It is most of the time done either by sea route or trade routes. The very European *World System Theory* was used by the invaders as a tool for Imperialism. The terms core and periphery are applied to the nation that is imperialized or invaded. The core is the area or nation that is considered to be a rich and high area of Income and Profit. Contrary to this, the Periphery is the nation or state that is being invaded or highly likely to be invaded, that is, the area of low profit and income.[6]

Three important eras of imperialism have changed the history of the world. In the period between the 15th and 18th centuries, major powerful nations, including England, France, and Spain, had built their power franchises in the regions of Africa, India, and the East Indies. This very building of invasion has led the suppressed nation to rise against imperialism. This expedition and invasion have caused or molded the world into a new order.[7]

SPREAD AND IMPACTS

Imperialism leaves its effects on minds and histories for many years and sometimes for centuries. The very impact of some major imperialist invasions in the history of Mankind has affected greatly. Its impact has changed the scenario of the world in no time. Imperialism has affected many cultures and civilizations badly and has almost altered their lifestyle and social constructs. The use of force and violence in imperialism affects the psychological pattern of the inhabitants of the affected area. The very way of life and the lifestyle of the natives of the particular area completely change into a new spectrum. Like, the British invasion of the subcontinent was largely focused on the collection of resources and empowerment.

Many students of history are interested in studying Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* because of its importance in fiction. It displays many important themes such as psychological and Metaphysical. The most interesting theme is imperialism, which is widely read and appreciated. The novel shows the Brutal and harsh dealings of Whiteman with Blacks. Under the garb of Whiteman's burden to civilize the world, which is not so unified under one law or state. [8]

"The title I am thinking of is The Heart of Darkness, but the narrative is not gloomy. The criminality of inefficient and pure selfishness when tackling the civilizing work in Africa is a justifiable idea." [9]

Conrad goes on to criticize the attempt to imperialize Africa by the British that it only takes brute force to end the peace and to begin the wave of violence and killing. When you have force and capital, all is yours. Since the very claim of power is nothing but the weakness of others to accept your command and suppression. Imperialism not only stays in Politics and economics. It also reaches the zenith of Cast, Creed, and Color. White only takes possession of Black's life, wealth, and resources by feeling superior in Color cast or creed. This very conquest of taking possession of things or plundering or taking from those just because they have a little flatter nose or their complexion is not so attractive as invaders.

We are living now in a concept of Globalization. The idea that declares acceptance, prosperity, and peace for all itself contradicts in many ways. It tells us about the acceptance of all the global cultures and nation and their beliefs under an umbrella of peace and prosperity. But in fact, globalization is the only instrument used to boast of the victory of powerful nations or states. It is used to highlight the importance and vastness of the cultures and values of the powerful nations and to hide the miseries and importance of the working class or underdeveloped countries. Under the rule of international organizations and the media, it is attempting to hide their hideous or illegal crimes and to present them as legitimate ones.[10]

19th-century Globalization is the modern form of Globalization because it involves industrial-scale growth. The evolution of Industrial trade made the Imperialists attain the policy of globalization cum Imperialism for cheap production with the rapid growth of the economy. Imperialism also affects another way around in the form of Modern banking and modern financial crises. The modern agents of Globalization Imperialism include some renowned international organizations, including the IMF, the World Bank, etc., which aim to create loans for underdeveloped or poor states to meet their financial needs or to balance their deficits. But it all comes up with some imposed rules and regulations that capture or hijack the running economy of the states and make them bankrupt. [11]

"The Critics believe that the conditions? Strategies are imperialistic strategies to capture developing economies. An economist, Joseph Stiglitz (a Nobel prize winner and former Chief Economist at the World Bank) argued against the IMF for the policies that he says often make the fund's clients worse, not better off."(Globalization_capitalist_imperialism).

Imperialism spreads its wings to the cultural spectrum also. It also predates the cultural upbringing and consciousness of the people of a powerfully weak tradition. Imperialists consider them the *salt of*

the earth, making them spread their cultural values forcefully and dominate others in cultural regimes. The most dominant cultures or powers of the world are not ready to accept the growing cultures of other nations or inferior ones. The modern use of technology and media has had an easy access effect on other growing cultures.

"The principal target of cultural imperialism is the political and economic exploitation of youth. Imperial entertainment and advertisement target young people who are most vulnerable to U.S. commercial propaganda. The message is simple and direct: 'modernity' is associated with consuming U.S. media products." [12]

Imperialism is not a new concept in the modern world. It was when some mother nations or states started to take control of the smaller countries or states or colonies for political, cultural, and economic domination. Imperialism has, with all other factors, changed or reshaped the world order. It has greatly affected and reshaped the global system. There are a variety of opinions and views about Imperialism depending upon the reference point or perspectives of thinking from different constructs. Imperialism has always been affected in the form of colonization. This is a negative view. It can be seen from the arguments that the powerful still suppress the weak. There is no point in civilizing the smaller colonies or states. In the name of Civilizing, all there is is hard work, cheap labor, violence, and suffering. These events lead to post-traumatic effects on their psychology. The colonies and the natives were not allowed to live their lives according to their beliefs and traditions. They are usually deprived of their freedom. There was exploitation and hunger everywhere.

CONCLUSION

Natives were forced to live in these conditions. They were forced to accept the culture, tradition, and sometimes religion of the dominating powers; failure to do so resulted in the killing of innocent lives. The lives of the children, women, and old people also became gloomy. The children were put to work as slaves as the best source of cheap labor. Millions of people have died from this. They were deprived of all their lands, their houses were burnt, and their resources were plundered from them. They were looted of all their valuables, even their lives.

Imperialism is never a matter of good cause and effect. Natives are heavily exploited and forced to live. All Africans and Asians were deprived of their basic rights. They were forced to accept the new culture. Imperialist powers took all their assets and gave nothing in return. Imperialists wanted resources, raw materials, national glory, and their so-called white man's burden to civilize them. In their view, what they were doing was helping those poor colonies. But in reality, all they were doing is hurting and exploiting them. They were creating chaos among the smaller communities, causing anarchy and civil war among them. This was never productive.

An Imperialist is just like a landowner who has a slave or a worker for him working five out of seven days in a week. Their looting and plundering changed the world into a place that is now pretty much harder to live in. It wasn't just looting. If they had to steal it from Mother Nature, that was not a

problem. But they let and forced natives to dig and produce for them. They imperialized the world 100 years ago, but still, we are facing and experiencing the effects of it greatly. [13]

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