Issue: Discussing the responsibility of former colonial powers towards their former colonies

Forum: Special Political and Decolonization 4th Committee of the General Assembly

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Colonization

In the 15th and 16th century, Europe began discovering the rest of the world. At the end of world war 2, most of Africa and South/ South-East Asia belonged to European powers. Around the 18th century, when Europe experienced the Industrial Revolution, the idea of Imperialism gained significant importance. This desire to expand geographical area by establishing overseas territory let many nations settle on new territories.

Map showing the distribution of colonies at the end of World War 2, in 1945

Today most countries have signed and ratified the 'DECLARATION REGARDING NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES' made by the United Nations (UN) in 1962.

Key Terms:

Imperialism: the policy of extending the rule or authority of an empire or nation over foreign countries, or of acquiring and holding colonies and dependencies.

Colonial Power: A country that has occupied/controlled a country by governing the overseas country.

Colonies: A land or territory under full or partial control of another country and occupied by settlers of that country

Infrastructure: refers to the fundamental facilities and systems serving a country, city, or area such as road, railway and airports, but can also be buildings, power supplies and sewage.

Socio-economic difference: Difference of groups within a nation with focus of their economy status.

First World: Developed countries under American influence sphere

Third World: Countries that neither belong to the first world, nor are communist-socialist eastern countries

Consequences for the Colonies

Most of the inhabitants of the former colonies were working in the primary sector. The more educated people (people in control) belonged to the colonial powers and therefore there was a lack of education in many of these colonies. When then the colonial powers left, the colonies were forsaken without guidance or experienced leadership.

Additionally, former colonial powers caused conflicts between indigenous groups due to the political borders that were set.

During the time of colonization and imperialism, many of the African and Asian countries were exploited causing a lack of resources. In order to transport the produced goods, some kinds of infrastructure, mostly roads, were built, however it has not been any infrastructure that is of great use for the colonies. Thus, the colonies were left alone without sustainable and usable infrastructure.

Moreover, there were cultural problems caused by the concurrence of many different cultures and ethnic groups.

Typically, the colonising nation would pick a favoured group within the nation, who could rule for them. This group of people would get land and resources in exchange of loyalty. These groups are still known to be very influential and own much land. Besides causing internal fighting it has also created socio-economic tensions and issues, which are still seen today.

When the borders were set, the colonising nations did not consider its inhabitants, which has caused internal fighting between different ethnic groups in a nation. Many of the indigenous people were separated from their native land or tribes. These borders and

conflicts can be seen in Africa: Before the 1900´s there were no political borders and these borders then caused local disturbance due to fights over land and territories.

(The African Continent before and after 1914)

Former Colonies Nowadays

Some of the former colonies are now part of the newly industrialized countries and are seeking a better future. However most of the former colonies have not achieved such success yet, because of various issues mentioned (Consequences for the Colonies). Many of the former colonies face problems, such as:

- Lack of Education
- Political Instability
- Lack of Infrastructure
    - e.g. hospitals
    - streets etc.
- Poverty
- and others

UN Work and Treaties

History of the United Nations regarding decolonisation http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/history.shtml

Declaration granting independence to colonial countries and its people http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/152/88/IMG/NR015288.pdf?OpenElement

The Charter of the United Nations

CHAPTER XI: DECLARATION REGARDING NON-SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORIES (Article 73 and 74)
http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter11.shtml

Chapter XII: The International Trusteeship System

Chapter XIII Trusteeship Council

The Trusteeship Council, one of the main organs of the United Nations, was established under Chapter XIII of the Charter to supervise the administration of Trust Territories and to ensure that Governments responsible for their administration took adequate steps to prepare them for the achievement of the Charter goals.

The Charter authorizes the Trusteeship Council to examine and discuss reports from the Administering Authority on the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the peoples of Trust Territories. Trust Territories are former colonizers.

For Preparation

To former colonies
To former colonising nations
Has your nation been colonized?

If yes, then which country colonized your nation and for how long?
How many nations has your own nation colonized, and for how long?
What current problems is your nation facing caused by colonisation, and how does it try to solve the issue?
Which impact did your nation have on its colonies?
Has the nation that colonized your nation tried to make amends for its action, or is it in other ways contributing to your nation?
What is the current state of its former colonies?
How is the relation between you nation and its previous colonizer?
How does your nation improve the state of its former colonies?

To consider to both colonized and former colonising nations;

- Has your nation signed/ratified above-mentioned documents or resolutions, or any other documents worth taking into consideration?

- Has your nation participated in any significant work relating to colonisation/ decolonisation?

Useful Links

1. http://www.thehistoryconnection.com/Imperialism.html

2. http://www.the-map-as-history.com/maps/11-decolonization_independence.php

3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIJaltUmrGo

3. http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/history.shtml

4. http://humanityjournal.org/issue-1/human-rights-and-decolonization-new-perspectives-and-open-questions/

5. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Colonialism

Sources

1. http://www.thehistoryconnection.com/Imperialism.html

2. http://www.the-map-as-history.com/maps/11-decolonization_independence.php

3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIJaltUmrGo

4. http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/trusteeship.shtml

5. http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Colonialism

6. http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/152/88/IMG/NR015288.pdf?OpenElement

7. http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter11.shtml

8. http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/history.shtml