

Have Yesterday's Colonised Become Today's Colonisers?

Shôn Ellerton, June 20, 2025

Is it fair to say that many of those third world nations that were once colonised have now become today's colonisers?



I was thinking about this the other night.

Were those that were colonised in the past have now become today's colonisers?

Many of us talk about the so-called injustices of white settlers colonising land overseas, whether it be the United States, Australia, or vast swathes of land in deepest darkest Africa. The story is told repeatedly and, of course, the prevailing narrative is that white settlers are bad, and the indigenous people have always been victimised.

To be fair, it is partly true, but not all of it.

However, I'm not going to get into that. It only triggered me to think about how those living in the 'first world' are now being colonised by those from the 'third world'.

As if the tables had been turned.

There are several meaning for the word, *colonialism*, but a quick search on Google reveals that it means the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.

When the word, *colonialism*, is thrown at us, most of us picture an unspoilt wilderness inhabited by peaceful natives who live off the land. This had become

our collective picture in our mind and when settlers started colonising the land, this had *always* become perceived as a bad thing.

However, this is simply not true.

Certainly, there have been some horrific moments of history where colonisation has been particularly brutal. For example, the Belgian colonisation of the Congo region during the early 1900s. But there are many examples of colonisation which vastly improved our ways of living by evolving technology for betterment of health, developing a system to give us protection and justice, and ensuring that all of us have access to an ample supply of food. No one is starving in the first world. Sure, there are imperfections, but it was a damned sight better than living in the old native world. Unless, of course, you were the alpha male!

We also tend to associate the world of colonialism with the physical taking over a land and placing settlers on it. However, in today's world of politically defined boundaries and that every inch of land on Planet Earth has already been occupied by some nation of people, we must look upon modern colonialism in a different way. There is no Terra Incognita anymore.

Remember the definition of colonialism cited earlier. It included not only the physical placement of settlers, but also of exerting economic control over another nation or land.

Take, for example, China buying up vast tracts of land in Africa for economic gain to source material needed for the manufacture of electronics and batteries. Rather than bring in the military and set up army and air force bases, a strategy the United States has played out for many a decade, China's use of 'soft power' differs insofar that they will exchange services by offering to build up and improve the infrastructure of towns in urgent need of repair. For example, the provision of clean water, the establishment of schools and hospitals, and a source of consistent uninterrupted power supply.

One could argue that this is a form of economic colonialism. China is, most certainly, exploiting these African countries for the sake of economic gain. The Chinese may not be physically settling there, but they certainly hold power over the region through the mechanism of economic colonialism.

The power of globalism has enormous benefit to society in terms of being able to buy almost anything on the planet at the drop of a hat. There are downsides to globalism and that is of exploitation by larger and more powerful nations

exercising their form of economic colonialism onto smaller and more fragile economies within the third world.

Exploitation of third world nations often has its consequences which manifest themselves in future years. Such consequences include those very same third world nations returning the favour, so to speak, by exerting their influence socially and economically within the mother country that colonised them in the first place.

For example, take Qatar, a once small fishing community which had been colonised by the British. The British exploited Qatar for its strategic location on the gulf to enable passage for its East India Company fleet of ships. Qatar had also become an important gas source which was later realised thus providing Qatar with a rich source of wealth. Qatar became independent during 1971 and since has become one of the richest countries in the world in terms of GDP.

In recent times, Qatar has become an important source of wealth in the United States. However, Qatar had become strategic by gaining political and sociological influence in the United States through institutions of education. Some of the recent anti-semitic movement is attributed to this influence and has become quite a hot bed of discussion in mainstream and independent media.

One of the most striking examples of third world nations recolonising nations which had once colonised them must be the United Kingdom.

Over the last few years post pandemic, there have been several major riots in the United Kingdom that had arisen because of high levels of immigration and the lack of affordable housing. One of the major concerns often cited is that of migrants taking over the country. But much like a frog being slowly heated up in a jar of water, many parts of the UK, particularly those in more urban areas have experienced gradual increases in ethnic migration for several decades.

Pakistani, Indian, and Chinese communities, for example, have been a part of Britain's ethnic layout since the middle of last century. They are a part of Britain's social fabric as much as the so-called white indigenous population, some who claim that they are the *only* true Brits in the country. This is like saying that the only true Australians are those of the First Nations peoples, who crossed over from what is now Indonesia to the continent of Australia some fifty to sixty thousand years ago.

This reasoning is, of course, heavily flawed, because there is generally no such thing as being the original inhabitant, unless one stumbles on some piece of land that no one has claim to, which, today, seems unlikely. Not only is this reasoning flawed, but it is also wrong. Does it mean that just because one person discovers a piece of land that no one has *ever* been to, that no one else in the future who is not related to that first person to live on that piece of land will ever be a *true* inhabitant? Of course not!

Taking an unlikely example. If a new piece of land materialised in the middle of international waters and I was the first to colonise it, does it mean that *no other* race apart from myself will ever claim to be a true inhabitant? Would I ever be accepted as an indigenous person of the island in today's modern international community?

Interestingly, and as a side note, the volcanic island of [Surtsey](#) *did* materialise in 1963, but, being within Icelandic waters, it's a part of Iceland. It's been off limits to the public for the purposes of science.

We talk about the injustices of what so-called white people did by colonising other lands around the world in the past, but then we also complain about these very same nations flooding us with their migrants and refugees. What is, in fact, happening, is that they are colonising, or should I say, re-colonising the countries that once colonised them.

There is a good and a bad side to all this.

The good side is that nations can enrich their social fabric by ingesting some of the culture from other nations. Food and music are, perhaps, the two best example of enriching a nation's culture. Multiethnic societies can work very well. Migrants from other countries can improve our culture while assimilating into the country. In other words, migrants into Britain from all over the world who follow a successful path of multiethnicity identify themselves as being British foremost and have no problems with assimilating into British society and following their laws.

The bad side is when social fabrics are *replaced* by migrants from other cultures who do not wish to assimilate into the country into which they are migrating into. For example, migrants who enter Britain and then refuse to identify as being British but still enjoy the comforts and protection afforded to them. Some of these migrants may want to practice their own laws of justice which are not recognised

in the country into which they have entered. An obvious example is when a migrant breaches a law or custom that is considered legal or acceptable in their country resulting in a situation where the destination country relaxes or accepts the breach on account of multiculturalism. Unlike countries that have been successful in embracing multiethnicity and assimilation, those countries that stick to their divisive system of multiculturalism seldom bodes well for any nation in the long run.

It's all well to dwell in the past and keep pushing the narrative that we did so much damage by colonising parts of the world peopled by those who did not have a chance to catch up with the latest technology. But we also forget that colonising has often brought about enormous benefits to both coloniser and colonised. Binary, or black and white thinking, has seemed to be the mainstay of the collective narrative of how we taught about colonisation. Granted. Some of it was bad, but not all of it.

Who are today's colonisers?

Some have come back as immigrants or refugees from often impoverished or war-torn countries. Others may have come from what was once third world nations that had turned into the richest nations on the planet through the trade of natural resources.

One could surmise that yesterday's colonised has become today's colonisers. However, the reality in today's global society, I think that everyone is trying to colonise each other through economic, cultural, or religious influence.