

Discussion: Colonialism and the Formation of the Modern World-System

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Colonialism is the physical occupation and political subjugation of a territory by another state to benefit economically. In *The Changing Global Context*, colonization is explained as the empire's expansion into new areas to increase its resource base and counter the law of diminishing returns (Knox & Marston, 2015). As populations in Europe continued to increase, productivity dropped unless new land, labor, and raw materials were acquired. Colonization enabled the European nations to obtain minerals, crops, and slave labor in foreign lands. The process created long-lasting economic dependence and laid the foundation for the modern world-system.

A world-system refers to a global network of interdependent countries related by political and economic rivalry. It emerged in the sixteenth century as European exploration interconnected the faraway areas with trade and conquest (Knox & Marston, 2015). The system consists of three key elements: core, semiperiphery, and periphery. Advanced industries, finance, and global institutions are controlled by core regions. Peripheral areas provide raw materials and cheap labor. Semiperipheral areas are in between with low industrial potential. The structure depicts a spatial division of labor as various regions specialize in differing ways of production.

Colonialism organized the unequal system. European states industrialized and amassed capital as colonies exported primary goods. Most of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa today remain dependent on commodity exports, and core countries control technology and finance. Despite the development of some semiperipheral states, uneven development still dominates. It implies that globalization opens markets and still replicates structural inequalities initially instituted by colonial expansion.

Reference

Knox, P., & Marston, S. (2015). The Changing Global Context. In *Human Geography: Places and Regions in Global Context* (7th ed., pp. 31–63). Pearson.

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