

# Strengthening Decolonization in Order to Prevent Climate Change

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As the world continues to develop, more and more conflicts and complications arise. Global issues such as **terrorism, poverty, hunger, and climate change** are some major challenges that humanity faces everyday. Although they seem out of reach at times, we know that if we choose to keep hesitating and neglecting these issues, eventually it will be too late.

The problem with such wide ranging issues is that they are extremely complicated to understand. Oftentimes there are too many parties involved, too many people and countries have their own preferences. When in reality we needed to work together to stand a chance against the aforementioned global issues. But throughout all the chaos that one can tend to lose themselves in, there are often opportunities to look closely into history and understand the relationship between the present and the past.

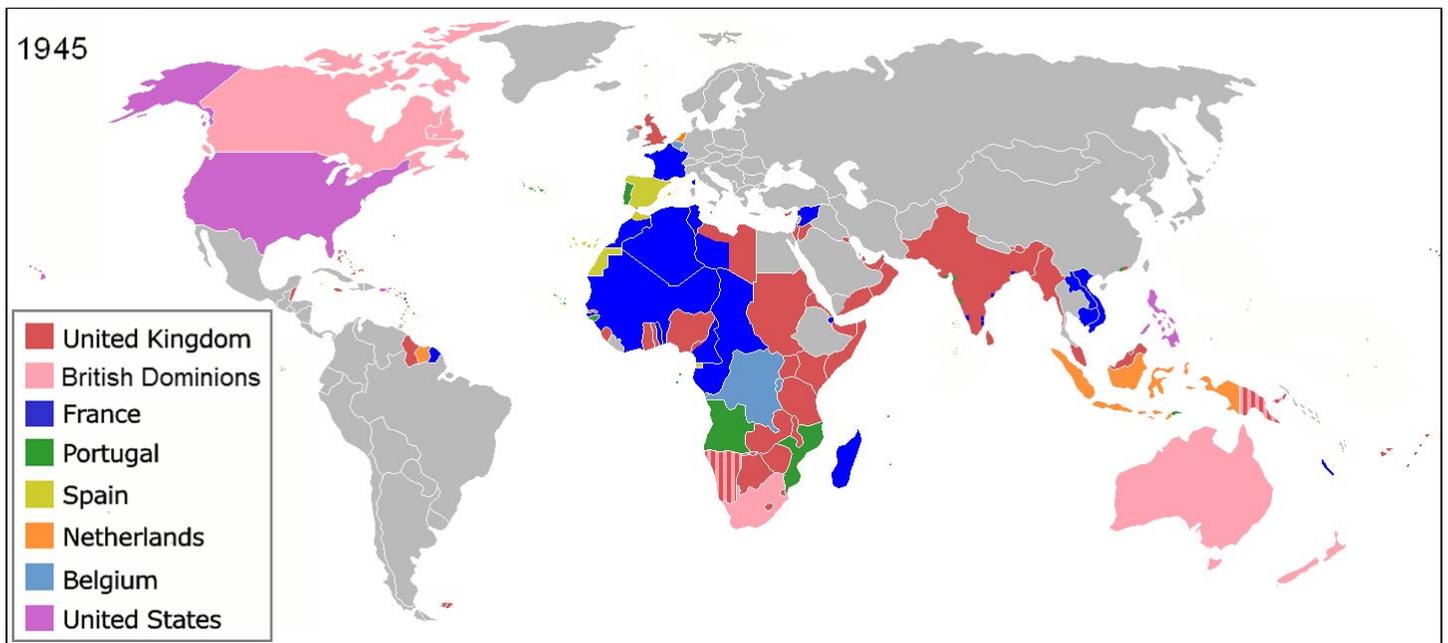
Many of the global issues we are facing nowadays are mainly due to how European countries exploited and oppressed other countries and continents within 1500 - 2000 AC. Although the term colonialism has already been correlated to previous historical events, in modern understanding it is strongly connected to the "exploration of the new world" and the tremendous impacts the following events had on indigenous people all over the globe.

***Western colonialism***- a political-economic phenomenon whereby various European nations explored, conquered, settled, and exploited large areas of the world.

Within the 19th and 20th century European countries as well as Japan occupied big **territories** within Africa, Asia, as well as North and South America in order to extend their **economic, social, and political influence**. They did so by justifying violence and terror with cruel theories about race and human values. Not only have European crimes brought trauma, poverty and extraordinary suffering while colonialism was actively happening, but have also had a long term impact on the development of stable governments and a strong economy of former colonies. This is especially true in Africa where many decolonized countries were forced to take over a **Western policy system**, which was not made for smaller communities in the first place. Consequently many foreigners have trust issues with the system nowadays, even after they gained back their independence, which led to little to no support and opened doors for autocracy and dictatorship.

The impacts of **imperialism** have been known to have a direct correlation to **poverty**. Africa for example has incredible economical resources but still holds 6 of the 10 poorest countries in the world. Africa alone contains 10% of the world's oil resources, 50% of its diamonds. and 25 % of the gold. **Unstable governments and dictatorships** (e.g. within the borders of Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Chad, Cameroon, Eritrea, and Sudan) led to national oppression, little payment, and ongoing tension between the government and the citizens. **Corruption** and **oppression** are known to be the main reasons for ongoing poverty, lack of education, and different opportunities. To this day Western countries continue to take advantage of the cheap oil trading and play their part in supporting an exploitional system.

Map Showing Colonized Territories Around 1945:



Data of 2021 according to Global Finance Magazine:

| 2021 | Country                      | GDP   |
|------|------------------------------|-------|
| 1    | Burundi                      | 727   |
| 2    | Central African Republic     | 823   |
| 3    | Democratic Republic of Congo | 849   |
| 4    | Eritrea                      | 1060  |
| 5    | Niger                        | 1106  |
| 6    | Malawi                       | 1240  |
| 7    | Mozambique                   | 1203  |
| 8    | Liberia                      | 1414  |
| 9    | South Sudan                  | 1,602 |
| 10   | Sierra Leone                 | 1,690 |

## Decolonization

According to Wikipedia, *decolonization* is the undoing of colonialism, the latter being the process whereby a nation establishes and maintains its domination of foreign territories.

Many of the definitions found declare *decolonization* as an "undoing" of former colonialistic structures. That isn't necessarily true as structural disadvantages both **socially** and **economically**, are still a main issue of our globalized world.

Additionally there are many internationally independently recognized countries that are still depending on external help in case of **annexation** or **economic support**. The undoing of established domination within a short period of time (1945-75) is a part of *decolonization*, but *decolonization* is not just the official, international commitment of independence, but rather an ongoing process, that started with resistance against the oppressor and remains until today.

## History

When the tension within Europe turned into two world wars the colonial powers needed to make compromises in order to remain influential outside of Europe. The ongoing world war II weakened every party and its military, therefore many people from the colonies were recruited to fight for their oppressor. Seeing that those countries got important units, colonized countries often made deals where they would give away recruits in exchange for independence and rights.

In India for example independence was at sight around 1942, through the thriving **national movement** that had been ongoing for decades Indians were now **liberated** from the British imperial rule in 1947.

Europeans realized they could not maintain **imperialistic structures** as they were. Many were convinced that former colonies would remember them as helpful and would consequently be cooperative in further proceedings. From a retrospect perspective this idea seems impossible to understand and can be seen as an indicator of European arrogance.

In some cases *decolonization* might have been peaceful, but in most cases it was a military act. The Algerian war, as well as the Indochina Wars are seen as the most brutal **military acts** within the second half of the 20th century. Equally as terrifying were the Indonesian war (1945 - 1949), the Korean war (1950-1953), or the Vietnamese war (1964-1973). As a direct consequence of *decolonization* these wars were quite similar to the civil wars in Congo, Nigeria, Angola, Mozambique and other African nations. In addition to that the general perception of imperialism changed within society.

Through photographs information could get delivered more accurately and more people started to question **Western ideologies**. *Decolonization* as a formal political process brought independence in regard to borders, constitution, law, government, police, flag and national hymn. In 1913 there were 163 colonized territories, in 1965 there were only 68, and in 1995 it dropped all the way down to 33. The UN speaks off 16 countries today that are still dependent on their former "mother" country, although **military oppression** is not the case anymore.

## Climate Change

**Climate change** is the long term increase of the earth's average temperature due to the increase of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gas emissions all around the world.

**Anthropogenic climate change** explains global warming as an effect of human agriculture and industry. The greenhouse effect is a key term for this matter. It occurs when gases of the atmosphere trap the **sun's heat** and **radiation** and in result heat up the Earth making it habitable. When global emissions increase the trapped heat within the **greenhouse gasses** increase simultaneously. Some of the consequences include: melting of permafrost and glaciers, tsunamis, tropical storms, heatwaves, erosion, soil dehydration, diseases, and malnutrition.

Climate change affects all countries in all continents - although some are more affected than others. Strong dissonance can be seen between industrial and developing countries as they face a different significance in regards to the impact of global warming.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, **developing country** is defined as a “country with little industrial and economic activity and where people generally have low incomes”

These countries are the most affected by climate change and they also happen to be the least protected ones. Their **vulnerability** is due to multiple factors such as poor standard of living, lack of education, corruption and instability of governments, that can limit their ability to respond and prevent the consequences of global warming. Although not all "developing countries" share the same prerequisites, they often share a colonial past, and lack of opportunity. Climate change is also expected to reverse many of the achievement gains made in these countries and limit further development.

First of all are many countries relying on **regional agriculture**, therefore they needed fertile soil, (to an extent) predictable weather, stable climatic conditions, without these factors crop failure and existential distress would be the consequence of erosion and soil dehydration.

Secondly: especially true in Asian countries, the reliance on glacier's water inflow in the summertime is immense. Around one billion people could be faced with water shortage within the next ten years, as the glaciers of the Himalayas and the Tibetan plateau are expected to lose about one third of their size by 2050. Main water supplies for these areas are the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Indus, Yangtze, Yellow, and Mekong rivers. (Experts from Latin America are expecting a similar process there.)

Thirdly: a lot of the decolonized countries did not have the chance to **industrialize** their economies as the Western population did. As a consequence we are facing an imbalance between fault and responsibility. For example Africa can not be held accountable for most of the world's CO<sub>2</sub> emission, still its most affected by its impact. According to actual data around 75 to 250 Million of Africa's population is going to be challenged by water shortage, or - the other way around - rising of the sea level.

Storm surges are destroying important parts of the infrastructure, rising heat and a growing population support the spread of infectious diseases, **internal conflicts** are getting stronger and the international migration will continue to grow as land will get uninhabitable.

Nicholas Stern - former World Bank Chief Economist - stated that climate change and its impacts will cost the world's **gross domestic product** around 5 - 20 % annually - letting global warming happen would be more expensive than actively investing in prevention. For example Uganda is expected to be losing significant parts of their coffee plantations within the next decade, thus losing a lot of the land's resources.

For a solution orientated strategy the world's population needs to function as a team - helping each other out to build a sustainable future.

Industrialized countries need to reduce their own emissions and help developing countries with money and educational support, also seeing that they depend on a lot of natural resources from other nations. Countries that are especially influenced by separation, ethical conflicts, weak economy and fragile policy are oftentimes post colonized societies that are in the process of decolonization.

Populations all around the world need to make an effort in regards to fair, democratic political systems - even in countries that tend to have been **democratic** for decades. Developing countries that built strong economies such as India or China have to be recognized as equally as legitimate to grow and reduce poverty based on a coal economy as industrialized countries.

The best solution for preventing further global warming would be to firstly, admit that the already done can't be undone and that the only way to improve is by delaying harmful consequences of global warming and finding ways to prepare beforehand. Secondly, **optimize** energy supply, consumption and efficiency by using renewable resources, and thirdly, support developing countries and understand it as a global effort, instead of a European attempt of making up for their past.

## **Concrete solutions**

When the United Nations were established in 1945 they made it their priority to support countries in combating different global issues. One of the main ways they decided to support those countries is decolonization. As of today the UN supports approximately 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories throughout the world. There are departments in place such as the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs that help support the General Assembly especially in topics concerning decolonization and the general eradication of colonialism.

## Further Recommendations for Sources

### Books:

1. “*Decolonization since 1945: The Collapse of European Overseas Empires (Studies in Contemporary History)*” - John Springhall
2. “*Colonialism / Postcolonialism*” - Ania Loomba

### Articles:

1. Ecosia. (2020, December 18). *Decolonizing the climate change conversation*. Retrieved April 10, 2021, from <https://blog.ecosia.org/decolonizing-climate-change/>
2. *The causes of climate change*. (2021, February 08). Retrieved April 10, 2021, from <https://climate.nasa.gov/causes/>
3. Blakemore, E. (2021, February 10). *Colonialism facts and information*. Retrieved April 10, 2021, from <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/colonialism>