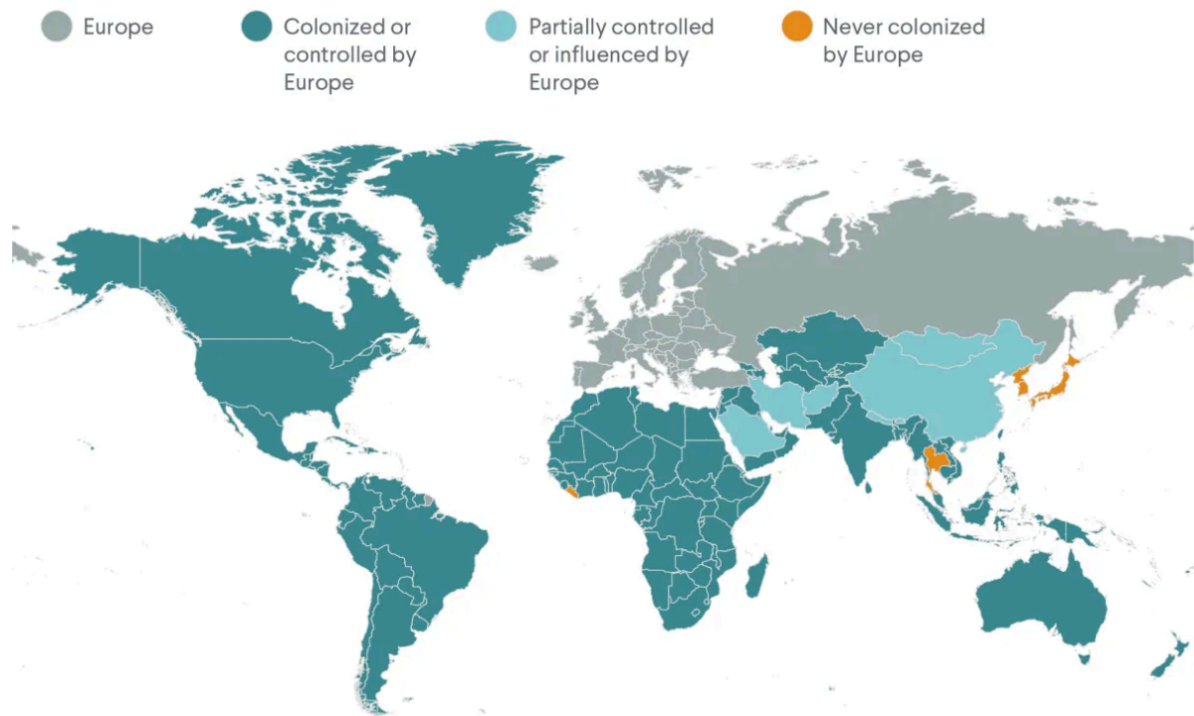


## Topic #2: Addressing cultural legacies of colonialism

### I. Background Information

In the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Age of Discovery began as European powers such as Portugal, Britain, Spain, France, and the Netherlands explored the world and found countless valuable resources. Along with the Age of Discovery came the Colonialism Era where all European powers started to exploit the lands they claimed. In summary, colonialism is the country's policy to expand territory to new lands far from home in the hopes of exploiting the area for resources.

#### Most Countries Have Been Colonized By Europe



As shown from the image, almost all dominant indigenous cultures were influenced by colonialism and were suppressed to a bare minimum, causing the loss of valuable cultural history. When colonized, most Europeans viewed themselves as racially superior to the indigenous people who the Europeans labeled as "savages". So, largely being Christian, the

Europeans took it as their duty to bring the indigenous people away from their sinful ways and into the light of God. This process of assimilation slowly killed cultures as the younger indigenous generations lost their heritage roots because of the negative stigma attached to their heritage from school. Schools and missionaries put immense pressure to assimilate to the European lifestyle leading to the total destruction of most indigenous cultures. This can be seen in varying degrees in almost any colony such as the Inuit people in Canada, Mali, Nigeria, South Africa, and countless more.

A specific example of racism today caused by colonialism centuries ago is the situation in Burundi. Burundi mainly has two ethnicities, the Hutu majority and the Tutsi minority, who lived in relative harmony as distant tribes before Germany and Belgium colonized Burundi. During this initial period of colonization, the European powers remained very distant and placed a lot of power in the hands of the Tutsi largely because they were more light-skinned than the Hutu. So, for decades, the Tutsi became wealthy and enjoyed many benefits of colonialism while the Hutu were left to rot. This caused a deep ethnic rift between the two sides that exists to this day as the nation is in deep conflict with multiple cases of genocides against each side. This entire conflict is derived from the decisions of the colonial era.

Over recent years, many countries have acknowledged the impact of colonialism on cultures leading to increased movements to support indigenous cultures. One new implementation has been the increase in national heritage days and land acknowledgements. Another implementation is the official acknowledgement of the damages from colonialism caused by Europe and other powers. Additionally, many nations in Europe, particularly the UK, are being pushed to pay reparations to indigenous communities whose ancestors were abused by the British. In general, everyone supports the rise of indigenous cultures' acknowledgements, but the impact remains as colonialism's damage remains from younger generations being ashamed of their heritage.

## **II. UN Involvement**

After the formation of the United Nations, 80 colonies became independent countries which led the UN to form the Trusteeship Council which was based on acting on the UN Charter's

Chapter XI. This chapter tells the UN to guide decolonization efforts and the UN has attempted to do so ever since its founding.

In 1960, GA resolution 1514, also known as the Declaration on Decolonization, was signed. This acts to this day as a guiding principle to remove all influences of colonialism and promote self-dependence of former colonies. Additionally, the UN hosts regional meetings on decolonization and attempts to make resolutions to protect former colonial countries' rights. The UN has focused more on the protection of self-dependence and sovereignties of countries instead of the specific repair of cultural damages from colonialism.

### **III. Bloc Positions**

Although most nations and politicians support the development of developing states and supporting indigenous people now, Europe is still hesitant to take accountability. Numerous movements in Europe for reparations have stalled because the European powers are afraid of opening the door to countless past atrocities that they must pay for. Additionally, some European powers like France and the UK have kept artifacts from past colonies in museums and they refuse to return the artifacts. In general, Europe supports humanitarian aid for those in need but remains hesitant to give too much.

More developing countries and blocs such as Africa and Asia argue that European powers have not paid enough to make up for the damage caused by their colonialism. The most significant argument by many developing countries is the loss of native artifacts to European museums that are refused to be returned. An example of this conflict is Nigeria's Benin Bronzes that were taken by Britain in 1897 and are now scattered across European museums.

### **IV. Questions to Consider**

There are many ways to approach this topic and often solutions can be found from the country you are representing. Here are a few guiding questions to consider when creating solutions for the topic:

- How can ethnic rifts from colonialism be repaired?
- What activities can be organized to promote indigenous cultures?
- How can racism originating from colonialism be mitigated?

- How can the new generation become proud of their heritage once again?
- Are there any current regional programs in action that can be adopted internationally?

## **V. Sources and Useful Links**

OHCHR - Racism, discrimination are legacies of colonialism

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/get-involved/stories/racism-discrimination-are-legacies-colonialism>

UN – The United Nations and Decolonization

[https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/about#:~:text=Resolution%201514%20\(XV\)%20proclaims%20the,a%20right%20to%20self%2Ddetermination.](https://www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/about#:~:text=Resolution%201514%20(XV)%20proclaims%20the,a%20right%20to%20self%2Ddetermination.)

The Guardian – Here's how to repay developing nations for colonialism – and fight the climate crisis

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jan/14/heres-how-to-repay-developing-nations-for-colonialism-and-fight-the-climate-crisis>

Council on Foreign Relations – What is Colonization and How Did It Arise?

<https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/what-colonialism-and-how-did-it-arise>

BC Campus – Impact of Colonization on Indigenous Peoples' Culture

<https://opentextbc.ca/peersupport/chapter/impact-of-colonization-on-indigenous-peoples-culture/>

Justice Info – Colonial Crimes: The Reparations Movement Stalls in Europe

<https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/115285-colonial-crimes-reparations-movement-stalls-europe.html>