

SOCHUM HANDBOOK

Committee: Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)

Topic: The Issue of United States Military Presence in Developing Nations as a Form of Neo-Colonial Domination and Cultural Suppression

Name: Son Visal

Position: Deputy Chair

Introduction

Neo-colonialism has become a popular term for superpowers and former colonial powers to continue extorting the resources of other nations, most particularly the United States of America. While neo-colonialism can be briefly defined as the continued or renewed relations of domination of a nation by another nation following the end of formal colonisation, it is typically seen as economic in scope. However, it has later seen the usage of military, cultural, and political domination or interference. Nowadays it is most blatantly seen in modern international politics and economics, and it remains as a hindrance to the progress of achieving international peace and diplomacy. The term “neo-colonialism” is now being continuously drawn in comparison to the imperialism of old with new terms such as neo-imperialism. In a study by the University of California, Santa Cruz, it is stated that neo-colonialism is best distinguished as a branched off form of imperialism that emerged during the period of decolonial movements in Africa.

Nowadays, the United States of America stands as the most notable and distinct example of neo-colonialism as ever. Since the grueling periods of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union and its aftermath, the world saw the rise and influence of US hegemony. The country itself claims, in its 2025 National Security Strategy, that the American Strategy, “America First”, brought forth by the Trump Administration is focused on a strategy that is largely centered on American interest and addressing conflicts that concerns the US’ goals, but it seems that America are

abusing the excuse of attacking American's interest to invade the sovereignty of other sovereign nations to extort and acquire resources related to strengthening the country while disregarding the trails of instability that they had brought upon their "enemy" just for the goal of fulfilling their Manifest Destiny desires. This has also led to the suppression of culture, especially those of indigenous backgrounds. The most notable one is during the 19th Century, where it led to the displacement, death, forced relocation and the stripped human rights of all native Americans, only made accessible to them by the government in the 20th Century.

Currently, the US holds the most number of military bases around the world. Although it is fair for countries to set up defense related agreements, it is important to understand the impact of having a foreign military presence in the region and how it heavily affects the geopolitical environment and diplomacy within that area. The US has been heavily involved in the regional conflicts of others since it threatened American "values", and the country has even caused the escalation of these conflicts in order to maintain its control over the nation or region. This is classic neo-colonialism and it's crucial that there must be repercussions implemented as colonialism is a violation of Chapter XI and XII of the UN Charter and the principles of self-determination.

Key Terms

Neocolonialism

The practice of powerful nations—particularly former colonial empires and modern superpowers like the United States—using economic, political, military, or cultural pressure to control or exploit weaker, less developed nations, long after formal colonial rule has ended.

Hegemony

Political, economic, military, or cultural dominance and leadership exercised by one nation, state, or social group over others.

Manifest Destiny

A 19th-century doctrine and political belief that the United States was divinely ordained and naturally entitled to expand its territory across the entire North American continent, spreading its democratic and cultural values.

Cultural Suppression

The systematic forcibly restricting, banning, or erasing of a group's language, traditions, religious practices, and cultural identity, typically enforced by a dominant power or government to ensure control and assimilation.

Political Domination

The exercise of supreme authority, influence, or control by one nation, faction, or institution over the government and decision-making processes of another group or territory, effectively stripping them of political autonomy.

Africa's Decolonial Movements

The mid-20th-century political, social, and armed campaigns across the African continent aimed at overthrowing European colonial rule, restoring indigenous sovereignty, and achieving self-determination for newly formed African nations.

Native Americans

The indigenous peoples who inhabited North, Central, and South America prior to European contact and colonization, along with their descendants who maintain distinct tribal, cultural, and sovereign identities.

Cold War

The period of geopolitical tension, proxy conflicts, and ideological competition between the United States and the Soviet Union—along with their respective allies—spanned from the end of World War II until the collapse of the USSR in 1991, characterized by continuous nuclear threat without direct military engagement between the two superpowers.

UN Charter

The foundational treaty of the United Nations, signed in 1945, which sets forth the rights and obligations of member states, establishes the principal organs and procedures of the UN, and codifies key principles of international law such as national sovereignty, sovereign equality, and the prohibition of the threat or use of force.

Self-determination

The fundamental principle in international law is that a nation, group, or people has the inherent right to freely choose their own political status, form of government, and economic, social, and cultural development without external interference.

Background Information

Ever since the Monroe Doctrine implemented by the 5th US President in 1823, which explicitly states, that all European powers trying to establish control within the American continent or better known as the Western Hemisphere will be seen as unfriendly acts and that the United States shall oppose those attempts to interfere in the affairs of newly independent nations. Although the published doctrine seemed miniscule to the European superpowers at the time, over time this doctrine is seen as one of the most influential documents when it comes to shaping American foreign policy and when it comes to discussing the role of the US in the Western Hemisphere itself.

Consequently, this marked the start of US hegemony, and the efforts of the US to assert itself as the superpower of the Western Hemisphere, allowing there to be no other superpower that can dominate the region. During the colonial period of history, the US moved remarkably fast to secure land mass such as purchasing Louisiana from the French in 1803, and the Mexican-American War that lasted from April 1846 to February 1848 with the thirst of expansion ending after historical events such as the purchase of Alaska on March 30th 1867, over-throwing the Hawaiian Kingdom on January 17th 1893, and the purchase of Alaska on March 30th 1867, and the Spanish-American War in 1898 leading to the annexation of Spanish colonies such as Guam, Cuba, the Philippines and etc. And some later became US-controlled territories till this day. This was a period known as American imperialism or more popularly referred to as the American Empire.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the global landscape changed overnight, leaving the United States as the sole superpower standing and kicking off a unique Post-Cold War era. This period wasn't about the U.S. expanding by conquering new territories, but rather about Washington quietly embedding its power into the structural fabric of global politics, economics, and culture. Instead of seizing land like traditional empires of the past, the U.S. focused on rewriting the rules of international trade, military alliances, and global governance to match its own democratic and free-market ideals. You can see this most clearly in how the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) evolved. Rather than packing up after its original Cold War enemy disappeared, NATO started growing, bringing in former Soviet satellites and

Warsaw Pact countries throughout the late 1990s and 2000s. This steadily pushed the Western military alliance directly up to Russia's border, a strategic shift that still drives intense geopolitical tensions today. At the same time, the U.S. stepped comfortably into the role of the world's policeman, moving toward a highly active, interventionist foreign policy. Whether framing these operations as humanitarian interventions, regional stabilization, or anti-tyranny campaigns, the American military routinely led massive international coalitions in places like the Gulf War, the Balkans, and eventually the post-9/11 campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. On the economic front, Washington went all-in on globalization and neoliberal capitalism. By aggressively backing free-trade deals like North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 and pushing heavily for the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995, the U.S. dismantled classic trade barriers around the world. This opened the floodgates for American multinational corporations and financial institutions to walk directly into freshly opened markets across Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia. It also helped that the mid-1990s digital revolution was fundamentally born and funded in America; by pioneering and commercializing the early internet, the U.S. essentially built the physical and digital plumbing for the modern global economy. This massive technological edge locked in an era of unmatched American soft power. Hollywood movies, pop music, fast food, and American cultural values became global defaults, integrating themselves into the daily lives of billions of people and cementing a unique kind of global dominance that didn't need physical lines on a map to prove its reach.

Major Countries/Organization Involved

United States of America

The United States of America has consistently involved itself into many regional and global conflicts on the premises of protecting American interests and upholding the values of democracy and the freedom of the population

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

The CIA is known as the civilian foreign intelligence service of the United States federal government, responsible for collecting, analyzing, and processing national security intelligence from around the world. It has been widely excused for being the cause of many conflicts around the globe, most notably within the Middle East.

United Nations

The United Nations stands as a pedestal to the principles of self-determination and democracy but has been lacking and lenient when it comes to confronting superpowers such as the US violating the UN Charter and the self-determination of other sovereign nations

The Middle East

The Middle East comprises key countries in geopolitics such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, and many more countries. The region has seen many anti-US movements due to the US military presence increasing exponentially within the area,

NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has been growing nonstop after the Cold War ended, bringing in many former Soviet satellites and former Warsaw Pact countries with the expansion having been theorized as of the main causes of the Russo-Ukraine War in 2022

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation has had varying relations with the US ever since the fall of the Soviet Union. The relations between the two nations are strained and highly tense due to the difference between stances in global politics and Russia being seen as a powerful nation that could threaten the US' influence and power in Europe and Asia.

People's Republic of China

China is seen as an economic powerhouse in Asia and is the second most economically powerful nation in the world right behind the US. To the US, China is the country's most fierce competitor in technology, and the relations between the two nations have met many trade disputes and conflicts in geopolitics. But lately under the second Trump administration, there has been more diplomatic engagement between the two countries.

Timeline of Events

<i>Date</i>	<i>Description</i>
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April 19th, 1775	The start of the American Revolution with the Battle of Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts
July 4th, 1776	The Declaration of Independence signaling the colonies wanting to break away from the British Empire and forming their very own nation with their own policies
September 3rd, 1783	The American Revolution concluded with the Treaty of Paris
December 2nd, 1823	US President James Monroe publishes the Monroe Doctrine that shaped US foreign policy ever since
December 6th, 1904	President Theodore Roosevelt amended the Monroe Doctrine, declaring the U.S. an "international police power" in the Western Hemisphere
April 1945	After WWII, the US has planted tens of thousands of US bases within Japan and South Korea, permanently stationing tens of thousands of US troops leading to many cultural friction.
August 19th, 1953	Operation Ajax was put into effect, which was basically a coup d'etat that was planned by the US and UK to overthrow the Prime Minister of Iran, Mohammed Mossadegh
1990s	After the Gulf War, the US established permanent military installations in Saudi Arabia
2001-2021	Long term military occupations of nations such as Afghanistan and Iraq to attempt "nation-building"

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- ***UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)*** : a legally binding treaty that recognizes that cultural goods and services are not mere commodities or economic assets to be dictated solely by free markets, allowing governments to enact laws, quotas, and public funding to protect local media, languages, and creative industries, serving as a vital safeguard against international trade agreements that could

otherwise force developing nations to fully open their markets to foreign cultural exports.

- ***UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:*** Article 31 of UNDRIP establishes the explicit right of indigenous peoples to retain control over their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and intellectual property.
- ***International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966):*** Article 1 of the Covenant guarantees all peoples the right to self-determination, affirming that they can "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."
- ***UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (1960), Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples :*** declared that the "subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation" violates fundamental human rights.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

There have been many attempts to solve the issue of the US military, being the main source of neo-colonial domination and cultural suppression of countries around the globe by nationalizing their resources in order to prevent attempts of extortion by foreigners. There have also been many organizations such as Non-Aligned Movements (NAM) formed in 1961 by India, Yugoslavia, Egypt, and Ghana to stay clear of US influence, avoiding proxy interventions and economic subordinations. Other instances include, the New International Economic Order (NIEO), proposed by the developing nations at the UN in 1974, demanding fairer trade terms, control over national resources, and the reformation of institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to have less strict loan terms that lead to harsher economic and political instabilities in the country.

Possible Solutions

To address the impact of U.S. military presence worldwide, it is highly advised to propose a shift toward true local sovereignty, regional cooperation, and peaceful diplomacy. This involves renegotiating legal agreements so foreign soldiers answer to local courts, alongside closing unnecessary bases and letting citizens vote on whether they stay. Rather than relying on a single superpower, regions can strengthen their own security alliances, like ASEAN or the African Union, to manage peace independently. Finally, countering cultural suppression requires investing directly in local communities. This means protecting indigenous languages, supporting

de-colonial education, and building diverse local economies so towns do not rely on military spending to survive. By prioritizing environmental cleanup and returning ancestral lands, communities can heal, protect their unique heritage, and transition from global military dominance toward a future built on equal, respectful partnerships.

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