



The Question of Reparations to Post-Colonial States

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Introduction

The discussion of reparations for post-colonial states is on the rise. Member States that experienced colonial rule are asking for some form of compensation for the violence and suffering of colonial conquest and rule, which they describe as the biggest injustice of the world.¹

Reparations has emerged as a major issue in the United Nations, where more than two-thirds of the 193 Member States are former colonial territories.² Some former colonial Member States demand reparations to rectify the consequences of past conquest and prejudice against individuals, groups or entire countries today. Colonialism, which dominated the modern era, resulted in brutal injustices against colonized peoples. Today these actions are described by many victims as Crimes against Humanity.³ Although colonialism ended in most of the world almost 50 years ago, its impact is still felt today in racist attitudes against descendants of colonized peoples and the poverty and underdevelopment endemic in many postcolonial states.

Due the pervasive legacies of colonialism, many post-colonial states and their advocates call on former colonial powers to issue reparations in order to atone for these past injustices and to help them solve the subsequent problems that have emerged as a result of colonialism. In response, many former colonial powers have questioned the legality of such reparations, arguing that they cannot be held accountable for the actions taken by people in power before their lifetime or that reparations would do little to solve the problems faced by postcolonial states today.

The United Nations can play an important role in the debate on whether former colonial powers should issue reparations to postcolonial states. Although the UN is not a world government and thus cannot force any binding decision regarding reparations on its member states without their consent, the UN is in a strategic position to bring the question of colonial reparations to the world stage.

Through its committees and assemblies, the UN can encourage dialogue between its member states as well as other interested parties on the question of colonial reparations. The UN can also sponsor independent studies and state visits which bring to light the realities of colonial life, the long-term effects of colonialism on colonized peoples and their descendants, and the best means for rectifying any injustices. Finally, the UN's International Court of Justice can also act as an arbitrator on individual cases or give legal advice on the question of reparations as a whole based on established international laws and norms.

¹ Ho, Sally. 'Reparations draw UN scrutiny, but those who'd pay say little', *Associated Press*. 28 September 2021. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/reparations-draw-scrutiny-whod-pay-80273817>

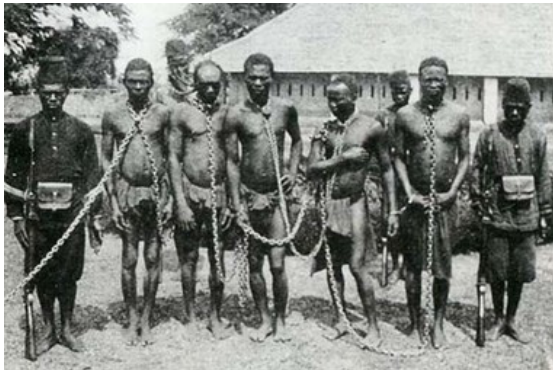
² United Nations. 'Decolonization', n.d., <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/decolonization>.

³ 'Reparations for Native Genocide and Slavery', *CARICOM*, 13 October 2015, <http://www.caricom.org/reparations-for-native-genocide-and-slavery>

Colonialism and its Legacies

Colonialism broadly refers to the political, economic and social domination of populations and the territory in which they resided by foreign, mostly European, powers from the late 15th Century to the mid-20th Century. Throughout this period much of the world's population was subject to colonial rule, for instance, an estimate published by the U.N. places approximately one third of the world's population in this category at the end of World War II.⁴

In most instances, colonies were established to enrich the state that controlled it. This wealth accumulation took on many forms from the extraction of valuable natural resources in the colonies that could be used to fuel industrial enterprises in the home country, to imposition of trade restrictions and the destruction of local industries in the colonies, making colonies a guaranteed consumer market for goods manufactured at home.



Congolese men enslaved on a Belgian Rubber Plantation

These colonialist endeavors often led to the establishment of some sort of social hierarchy which enabled the colonial authorities, backed by military force, to dominate and control the majority of indigenous and other local groups, sometimes with terrible consequences.

Since colonized peoples were often viewed by the colonizers as primitive and subhuman, they did not qualify for the same rights and protections as the colonizers themselves. It was therefore acceptable, and sometimes encouraged, for the colonizers to confiscate the lands and homes of local peoples; enslave them or force them into some form of indentured servitude; suppress their local cultures and impose their own "civilized" cultural beliefs; and even exterminate large portions of their populations.⁵

The experience of decolonization, which brought political independence to the colonies, was equally as varied around the world. Some colonies achieved independence quite early, for instance much of the Americas had been decolonized by the 19th century just as the colonization of Africa and Asia was getting underway. Some colonies got independence peacefully. Many only achieved independence through violent revolution against the colonial state.⁶

⁴ 'The United Nations and Decolonization: Maps', *United Nations*, n.d., <http://www.un.org/en/decolonization/maps.shtml>

⁵ 'Colonialism', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 10 April 2012, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/>

⁶ 'Decolonization', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/decolonization>

Yet the achievement of independence did not bring an end to the unequal economic, social and political structures that were established under colonial rule. Since the local economies of many postcolonial states had been completely reoriented to the export of raw materials under colonialism and with little or no industrial infrastructure, many states struggled to build independent economies that would enable them to flourish as the former colonial powers had. For instance, one economist has estimated that prior to colonization, India's productivity represented 27 per cent of the world economy, but after British colonization this plummeted to a mere 3 per cent of the world total.⁷



*Indentured servants work on a tea plantation in India.*⁸

Furthermore, the racial and ethnic social hierarchies that were instituted under colonialism, survived after independence. Many former colonial powers viewed the poverty and underdevelopment that plagued postcolonial states as a just another sign of their inherent racial inferiority and not as the result of the destabilizing effect that colonialism had on their societies.

In some post-colonial states, social hierarchies were maintained, with select elites taking over the position of their former colonial masters in order to exploit their fellow countrymen. One of the most notorious was South Africa under *apartheid*. Non-whites were segregated and denied basic human rights. Today, many descendants of colonized peoples continue to face discrimination based on race and ethnicity.

Recent action

The surge of the Black Lives Matter Movement in the US helped encourage similar movements for action on similar problems elsewhere.⁹ There is a difference between living in a post-colonized world and a decolonized world. The main distinction is that post-colonialism still consists of what colonialism has done and the changes it has made compared to the pre-colonized world and the question is *how* do we live or what do we do from here on out in a once colonized society.

⁷ Hickel, Jason. "Enough of aid – let's talk reparations", *Guardian* 27 November 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/nov/27/enough-of-aid-lets-talk-reparations>

⁸ 'Book Launch Rana Behal', *International Institute of Social History*, 4 December 2014, <https://socialhistory.org/en/events/book-launch-rana-behal?language=en>

⁹ Kirby, Jen. 'Black Lives Matter' has become a global rallying cry against racism and police brutality'. *Vox*. 12 June 2020, <https://www.vox.com/2020/6/12/21285244/black-lives-matter-global-protests-george-floyd-uk-belgium>.



Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves of Saint Vincent and Grenadines addresses the UN General Assembly on the importance of reparations. Saint Vincent and Grenadines is one of 15 Caribbean bringing a colonial reparations lawsuit to the ICJ.¹⁰

CARICOM, the intergovernmental organization Caribbean Community and Common Market, with fifteen Caribbean Member States, has been at the forefront of these issues.¹¹ CARICOM explains that reparations is ‘...understood in the context of repairing the World in its deepest crisis.’¹² Its Reparations Commission lays steps that former colonizing countries can take in its Ten Point Plan, including ‘... full formal apology, repatriation, indigenous peoples development program, cultural institutions, public health crisis, illiteracy eradication, African knowledge program, psychological rehabilitation, technology transfer, and debt cancellation.’¹³

CARICOM takes in consideration General Assembly Resolution 60/147, which it helped write, which is the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law.¹⁴

The General Assembly has debated some tragic events of colonization including the heavy presence of colonial France and its role in countries such as Algeria and Rwanda, Belgium in the Republic of Congo, and Germany in Namibia.¹⁵ Also on the agenda is Namibia demand for reparations for the genocide in 1904-1907 against the Herero and Namaqua people by Germany.¹⁶

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Hayes, Adam. ‘Caribbean Community and Common Market’. *Investopedia*. 6 July 2021, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/caribbean-community-and-common-market-caricom.asp>.

¹² International Network of Scholars and Activists for Afrikan Reparations (INOSAAR). ‘Can reparations paid to the descendants of enslaved Africans, facilitate social, economic, and environmental development of the African diaspora by state parties?’ *People of African Descent and the Sustainable Development Goals. UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab*. 15 July 2021. <https://en.unesco.org/inclusivepolicylab/e-teams/people-african-descent-and-sustainable-development-goals/discussions/can-reparations-paid>.

¹³ CARICOM Reparations Commission. ‘10-Point Reparation Plan’, n.d., <https://caricomreparations.org/caricom/caricoms-10-point-reparation-plan/>.

¹⁴ United Nations Office of Legal Affairs (OLA). ‘General Assembly Resolution 60/147 (Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law), *United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law*, 16 December 2005, https://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ha/ga_60-147/ga_60-147_ph_e.pdf.

¹⁵ International Network of Scholars and Activists for Afrikan Reparations, *op.cit.*

¹⁶ ‘Herero and Nama Genocide’, *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, n.d., <https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/herero-and-nama-genocide>.



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Reparations

Reparations have become a common legal means of recognizing and addressing the impact of crimes against individuals, groups, and even entire countries. Over the years, they have taken on many forms depending on the context of the crime committed but generally constitute some combination of the following:

- Formal apologies made by colonial actors to victims.
- Establishment of *truth and reconciliation* commissions to examine colonial crimes.
- Financial compensation to individual victims.
- Financial compensation to victim states.
- Establishment of social and/or economic programs to address problems that have emerged as a direct result of colonial crimes.¹⁷

The most widely cited example of international reparations is that of Germany after WWII when the German government agreed to issue reparations to neighboring states that suffered damage under German occupation as well as to individual survivors of the Holocaust.¹⁸

The demand for colonial reparations is not a new phenomenon. As early as the 1960s, as many of the last remaining colonies were achieving their independence, groups like the Rastafarians of Jamaica and the Maori of New Zealand¹⁹ were calling for reparations and restoration of their rights that were lost under colonial rule. Over the past half century, as the impacts of colonialism became more widely known and as postcolonial states continue to struggle with the legacies of colonialism, these calls have only grown louder.

¹⁷ “Reparations,” *International Center for Transitional Justice*, 2016, <https://www.ictj.org/our-work/transitional-justice-issues/reparations>

¹⁸ ‘Restitution and Indemnification’, *Jewish Virtual Library*, 2012, https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0017_0_16663.html

¹⁹ Iorns, Magallanes Catherine J, “Reparations for Maori Grievances in Aotearoa New Zealand,” in *Reparations for Indigenous Peoples: International and Comparative Perspectives*, Oxford Scholarship Online, 2008. <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199235605.001.0001/acprof-9780199235605-chapter-19>



Dr. Shashi Tharoor, an Indian politician, calls for colonial reparations at the Oxford Union.²⁰

In recent years, the international organization of fifteen Caribbean states, CARICOM, took a leading role on the issue of postcolonial reparations.

In 2013, it established the CARICOM Reparation Commission (CRC) with the aim of engaging former European colonial powers on the issue of reparations for “Crimes against Humanity” committed by colonial rulers which include the institution of slavery as well as the genocide of indigenous peoples. Their work has led to research and development of a “Ten Point Plan for Reparatory Justice” in which the commission outlines how reparations should be issued. It includes formal apologies, rehabilitation programs, cultural institutions, international debt forgiveness, as well as development programs that include health and education initiatives.²¹

However, the legality of postcolonial reparations has been brought into question by most former colonial powers. In particular, they argue that, unlike other cases in which reparations were issued, colonialism and actions taken under colonial rule were not explicitly illegal at the time they were committed and therefore cannot be judged by today’s legal standards. Furthermore, that too much time has passed since these crimes were committed and that current governments and their people cannot be held accountable for the actions taken by governments during the colonial era. Local elite groups also participated in the colonialism project and may themselves violated human rights of their fellow countrymen, sometimes continuing violations long after independence.²²

²⁰ Bolton, Doug, ‘Dr. Shashi Tharoor tells the Oxford Union why Britain owes reparations for colonising India in viral speech’, *Independent*, 22 July 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/dr-shashi-tharoor-tells-the-oxford-union-why-britain-owes-reparations-for-colonising-india-in-viral-10407997.html>

²¹ ‘Reparations for Native Genocide and Slavery’, *CARICOM*, 13 October 2015, <http://www.caricom.org/reparations-for-native-genocide-and-slavery>

²² Shepherd, Verene A. ‘Jamaica and the Debate over Reparation for Slavery: A Summary Overview,’ *UNHCHR*, 20 June 2011, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/WGEAPD/ReparationShepherd.doc>



Protestors demanding reparations for African states outside of the British House of Parliament.²³

Despite these challenges, many postcolonial states and groups within states continue to press former colonial powers to issue reparations. Direct state-to-state or group-to-state negotiations are seen as the most effective means of pressing the reparation agenda. For instance, a recent case that was heard in the British High Court has led to reparations for a group of 5,000 Kenyan elders who were tortured under British colonial rule.²⁴ It is often easier to bring a case to the domestic court system of the former colonial power than trying to navigate the complexities of the international system which may not even lead to a binding ruling.

The Role of the United Nations

The UN has struggled to definitively establish whether there is a legal basis for reparations that is binding on all of its Member States. As an organization of sovereign states with conflicting views on the issue of reparations, it has been difficult to get all members to agree on a resolution.

As a result, the actions taken within the UN have largely functioned to draw global attention to the issue; to facilitate dialogue between member states; as well as to provide unbiased expertise and assistance in a number of areas that are relevant to the issue of postcolonial reparations such as international law, human rights, development, and international peace and security. Through these mechanisms, the UN can work to sway its opposing member states to come to an agreement on whether or not reparations should be issued to postcolonial states.

The General Assembly is one of the main governing bodies of the UN, which consists of all UN Member States, and has been very active in addressing the question of reparations to postcolonial states. In the past, this body has debated the question of reparations for victims of human rights crimes under colonialism and have passed a number of resolutions in favor of such reparations. For instance, the resolution on the “Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States” indicates in Article 16 that colonialism has impeded development and that all states which have practiced colonialism are responsible

²³ Lillywhite, James, ‘Hundreds march on parliament to demand African reparations for British colonialism’, *International Business Times*, 1 August, 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/hundreds-march-parliament-demand-african-reparations-british-colonialism-1573701>

²⁴ ‘UK to compensate Kenya’s Mau Mau torture victims’, *Guardian*, 6 June 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/06/uk-compensate-kenya-mau-mau-torture>



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for the restitution and full compensation for the exploitation, depletion, and damage of natural resources in postcolonial states.²⁵

A subsequent resolution on the “Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law” establishes that there is not a statute of limitations for the bringing of claims of human rights violations to domestic and international courts and assigns responsibility for issuing of reparations to the state in cases where the original perpetrators of the offenses cannot be prosecuted.²⁶

This position was supported and directly tied to the practice of colonialism in the recent resolution on the *Programme of Activities for the Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent*. This resolution identifies the connections between the racist actions and inhumane treatment of individuals under colonial rule and the continued mistreatment, and denial of basic human rights of people based on race today. It encourages states to establish ways to redress these past injustices through formal apologies and the implementation of various social programs.²⁷

The main problem with these resolutions is that they are only considered recommendations and it has been easy for those states who would be responsible for issuing reparations to ignore them. A contributing factor to this is that a few of the most vocal proponents of reparations are well known dictators of postcolonial states, with their own histories of human rights abuses and mismanagement of public funds. Their presence alone weakens the argument that reparations would genuinely help all people in the postcolonial state and discourages former colonial powers from considering the case at all.²⁸

Despite these setbacks, these debates have provided all members states with an opportunity to voice their opinions on reparations and indicates that a majority of states are in favor of reparations. Also, these resolutions have established standard expectations on the responsibilities of member states, particularly those states who have practiced colonialism in the past, and function by pressuring member states to conform to these expectations. Lastly, since these General Assembly meetings and resolutions are highly publicized in the media, these resolutions have generated debate amongst the citizenry within member states which may eventually pressure governments to act on these resolutions.

There are a number of UN programs, commissions and committees that serve as a body of independent and neutral experts that advise on issues relating to the question of colonial reparations such as human rights and development. They have conducted studies and country visits in order to analyze the connection between the structures and experiences of groups under colonial rule and the ongoing problems

²⁵ General Assembly resolution on the Charter or Economic Rights and Duties of States [A/RES/29/3281] 12 December 1974, United Nations, [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=a/res/3281\(XXIX\)](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=a/res/3281(XXIX))

²⁶ General Assembly resolution on the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law [A/RES/60/147], United Nations, 21 March 2006, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/496/42/PDF/N0549642.pdf?OpenElement>

²⁷ General Assembly resolution on the Programme of activities for implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent [A/RES/69/16], United Nations, 1 December 2014, http://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/pdf/A.RES.69.16_IDPAD.pdf

²⁸ Pilkington, Ed. ‘UN general assembly: 100 minutes in the life of Muammar Gaddafi’, *Guardian*, 23 September 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/sep/23/gaddafi-un-speech>



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postcolonial states and their people face today. They have also examined how states have addressed these problems in the past and provide recommendations on ways that states can improve their efforts.

For instance, a recent paper published by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on poverty and underdevelopment in the Caribbean has highlighted the need for reparations for these postcolonial states as part of a comprehensive plan to help these countries and their people achieve justice and recover from their colonial past.²⁹

These bodies have also been active in sponsoring conferences across the globe where different individuals, groups and government representatives gather to debate issues related to colonial rule, whether reparations could help solve these problems and if so, establish a framework to guide how reparations would tackle these issues.

For instance, in 2001, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) sponsored a conference on race and racism in Durban, South Africa, which sought to discuss the problem of racism that plague societies around the globe. Through this conference, the problem of racism was identified as a direct result of colonial endeavors and the unwillingness of governments to address this connection allows the problem of racism to persist in societies today. The conference participants outlined a number of actions that should be taken to rectify the problem of racism which included the issuing of reparations.³⁰

Despite their evidence in support for reparations for postcolonial states, these U.N. blocs have not been able to convince enough UN member states that reparations need to be issued. What they have succeeded in doing is to provide reliable information on the importance of reparations as one important element in addressing the problems that have emerged as a result of colonialism. This information has helped to inform the debate on reparations both within and outside of the U.N.

Essential Issues and Questions

The United Nations faces a difficult task of addressing the question of whether or not there should be reparations to postcolonial states. Given the different concerns of member states as well as the successes and failures of addressing the issue both inside and outside of the United Nations, the delegates should consider the following questions when deciding what action(s) the U.N. should take.

- Do former colonial powers have an obligation to issue reparations to postcolonial states under today's international laws and norms?
- Would reparations effectively atone for actions taken under colonialism as well as help to address the problems that postcolonial states face today?
- If reparations are not possible, what else can be done to effectively address these issues?

Some Possible Proposals for UN Action

²⁹ Shepherd, Verene A., 'Reparations & the Right to Development', *UNHCHR*, 6 April 2016, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/WGEAPD/Session16/VereneShepherd.pdf>

³⁰ 'World Conference against Racism: Daily Highlights', *United Nations*, 8 September 2011, <http://www.un.org/WCAR/dh/>



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Although many victims would prefer otherwise, they recognize the international community is not ready to approve massive financial transfers. They also appreciate the resistance of many Member States, afraid their past or recent conquests make them vulnerable to demands for future reparations.

The first major issue, then, is to decide how the UN will address these issues. Here are a few options. Delegates are likely to develop others:

International Court of Justice: One branch of the UN that, to date, has not been utilized to help answer the question of colonial reparations is the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The ICJ represents the judiciary body of the United Nations and works to settle legal disputes between member states as well as advises the main UN bodies on international legal standards.

In this forum, individual post-colonial states can bring a legal case against a former colonial power, as long as both are members of the UN, for damages occurred under colonial rule. After examining the international legal precedence and evidence for the case, the court would then issue a binding judgement that would permanently settle the dispute between the two countries.³¹

The drawback to such an approach is that because the UN has no mechanism to enforce these decisions, it would be up to individual member states to enforce the decision or to impose penalties, such as economic embargos, on states that refuse to implement the court's decision. The CARICOM group of Caribbean states have expressed their intention to bring a lawsuit against former colonial powers in this forum, however, court proceedings have yet to begin.³²

An advisory opinion on reparations: A second option would be to have an authorized UN body, probably the General Assembly or the Security Council, request an advisory opinion on the question of reparations to postcolonial states. In this context, the ICJ would consider testimonies by different UN bodies and member states as well as consider any international laws or norms on the issue. Because these cases are advisory, any decision reached in this forum is not considered binding on individual countries. However, the decision can be used to buttress other UN activities such as the passing of resolutions or add support for future individual state-to-state cases both at the international and the domestic level.³³

Create an ad hoc tribunal: A final option would be to create an ad hoc tribunal, an independent judicial body, in which individual postcolonial states can bring a legal case against a former colonial power, as long as both are members of the UN, for damages occurred under colonial rule. After examining the international legal precedence and evidence for the case, the court would then issue a binding judgement that would permanently settle the dispute between the two countries.³⁴

³¹ "Practical Information: Frequently Asked Questions," International Court of Justice, <http://www.icj-cij.org/information/index.php?p1=7&p2=2>

³² "14 Caribbean nations sue European countries for slavery reparations," Aljazeera America, 27 September 2013, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/9/27/14-caribbean-nations-sue-european-countries-for-reparation-over-slavery.html>

³³ 'The Court: How the Court works', *International Court of Justice*, n.d., <http://www.icj-cij.org/court/index.php?p1=1&p2=6>

³⁴ 'Practical Information: Frequently Asked Questions', *op.cit.*



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Funding and distributing reparations: Major financial issues also have to be solved, including where reparations money comes from, and deciding where it goes. Issues to be resolved include:

- Agreement from former-colonial Member States to contribute to a reparations fund.
- Creation of a commission and rules to invest or distribute reparations.
- Establishing priorities for which Member States receive reparations, and in which priority; who first, and who most?
- Addressing the risks that Member States made to contribute will finance reparations by reducing other forms of development assistance.

Focus on particular former-colonial Member States, such as France, Germany, Portugal, Russia, Spain, the United Kingdom or United States. In several countries these issues already are part of the domestic post-colonial debate:

- Belgium's debate focuses on the era of imperial rule of the Belgian Congo, today Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), run for many years as the private property of King Leopold. During these years much of the population was forced to work in natural resource extraction, leading to widespread suffering and death.³⁶
- Germany has a domestic debate over the deliberate killing of colonial subjects in Namibia in the early 1900s.³⁷
- France has a domestic debate over its colonialization of Algeria in the 1830s, the war of 1954-61, and its nuclear testing in Algeria in the 1960s.³⁸
- Russia (Soviet Union) does not have a domestic debate on the crimes of its imperial expansion in the 18th and 19th Centuries, or Soviet expansion in the 1940s. Under the nationalistic leadership of President Vladimir Putin, such openness seems unimaginable. But demands for acknowledgement and reparations have emerged from its former territories, especially Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.³⁹

³⁵ '14 Caribbean nations sue European countries for slavery reparations,' *Al Jazeera*, 27 September 2013.

³⁶ Neil Munshi, 'Belgian Congo: Belgium's reckoning with a brutal history in Congo', *Financial Times*, 13 November 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/a17b87ec-207d-4aa7-a839-8e17153bcf51>

³⁷ Kavena Hambira and Miriam Gleckman-Krut, 'Germany Apologized for a Genocide. It's Nowhere Near Enough', *New York Times*, September 2021 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/08/opinion/germany-genocide-herero-nama.html>

³⁸ 'France's 1960s nuclear tests in Algeria still poison ties', *France 24*, 29 July 2021, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210729-france-s-1960s-nuclear-tests-in-algeria-still-poison-ties>

³⁹ Worthington, Daryl. '€185 billion – The Cost of the USSR's Occupation of Latvia,' *New Historian*, 20 April 2016, <http://www.newhistorian.com/e185-billion-cost-ussrs-occupation-latvia/6334/> 'If you had to put a price tag (reparations) on Russia's occupation for the occupation of northern Europe (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) what would it be and why?' *Quora*, 2020, <https://www.quora.com/If-you-had-to-put-a-price-tag-reparations-on-Russias-occupation-for-the-occupation-of-northern-Europe-Estonia-Latvia-and-Lithuania-what-would-it-be-and-why>



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Country and Bloc Positions

Non-Aligned Movement: The 137 Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) are almost all former colonial territories. Its members are generally those developing states that were once colonies and thus are most in favor colonial reparations. The group has worked since 1955 to end colonialism and create an international economic and political environment conducive to their needs as post-colonial, developing states.⁴⁰ With their majority in the General Assembly, they are the leaders on these issues.⁴¹ Their major problem is not passing new resolutions, but ensuring they are meaningful and effective. How to enlist the support of potential funders, without endangering current aid and development programs they rely on?

China: China occupies a precarious position in the colonialism narrative as it has played the role of both colonizer and colonized in the modern era and as a result will likely remain neutral on the issue. Although never formally colonized, in the 19th and early 20th Centuries many of its port cities were occupied and controlled by European powers while its eastern areas fell under Japanese colonial control. Conversely in the 20th century, Chinese annexation of Tibet⁴² and contention with Russia over control of Mongolia⁴³ and other outlying regions have often been viewed as Chinese colonialist endeavors. Despite these dueling roles, China has indicated a preference for preserving its annexed territories and sought to forego its claim to reparations in exchange for recognition of its sovereign territory.⁴⁴

Europe: Most European countries are opposed to comprehensive colonial reparations as many were once colonial powers with extensive empires outside of Europe and thus would be liable to issue reparations. Some countries have agreed to issue apologies for colonialism but remain firm on their refusal to financially compensate their former colonies. The possible exceptions are those Eastern European states that fell under Soviet control during the Cold War. Some of these countries, such as Latvia, have sought to frame the Soviet occupation as colonialism and expressed an interest in seeking reparations from Russia, as the successor of the Soviet state, for damages incurred under occupation.

Russia: Russia's view on the question of colonial reparations would greatly depend on how colonialism is defined. This is largely due to the difference between Russia's colonial history compared and that of other European colonial powers. It never colonized areas of the "global south" and instead focused its colonizing enterprise East across Siberia and into what is present day Alaska. Also, as mentioned above, Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe and the Eurasian Steppe have often been framed as colonialist endeavors by former Soviet Bloc states. Russia has taken great strides to distinguish itself from other former colonial powers and has denied its colonialist history, instead arguing that it expanded "through

⁴⁰ Profile: Non-Aligned Movement, BBC, 7 August 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/2798187.stm>

⁴¹ '14th Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement', UNISPAL, 16 September 2006, <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/0E6B10A08491695E852571ED00534B7F>

⁴² Kessler, Dena Sloan, 'Tibet Will Remain World's Largest Colony Unless China Takes Action, Panelists Say,' *University of Virginia: School of Law*, 22 October 2007, http://www.law.virginia.edu/html/news/2007_fall/tibet.htm

⁴³ Sanders, Alen J.K., Owen Lattimore, Chauncy D. Harris, 'Mongolia,' *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 20 July 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mongolia>

⁴⁴ 'Joint Communique of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China,' *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, 29 September 1972, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/joint72.html>



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peaceful and voluntary unification, instead of the violent means employed by European empires.”⁴⁵ As a result, Russia has opposed any claims for reparations against itself.⁴⁶ Instead, Russia strongly supports the efforts of former colonies in the global south to seek reparations from their former European colonial powers.⁴⁷

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⁴⁵ Sinness, Michelle, ‘Empire of the Steppe: Russia’s Colonial Experience on the Russian Frontier,’ *UCLA: Center for European and Russian Studies*, 5 May 2014, <http://www.international.ucla.edu/euro/article/139315>

⁴⁶ Sharkov, Damien. ‘Russia Dismisses Latvian Claim of \$210 Billion in Soviet Damages’, *Newsweek*, <http://www.newsweek.com/russia-dismisses-latvian-claim-210-billion-soviet-damages-449555>

⁴⁷ ‘It’s high time to pay back colonial debt to African countries—Medvedev’, 27 June 2009, *Global Research*, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/it-s-high-time-to-pay-back-colonial-debt-to-african-countries-medvedev/14125>



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