

Essay: Shadows of Dominion

18 November 2024

It was the dawn of the 20th century, a time of industrial revolution and expanding empires. The Western Empire, facing economic stagnation and a rapidly growing population, cast its gaze across the seas to the resource-rich land of Eldoria. A vast, fertile country with a thriving native population, Eldoria's wealth of minerals, arable land, and abundant forests made it the perfect target for the Empire's audacious plan: not conquest by war, but by subterfuge.

The strategy began innocuously. The Empire encouraged migration to Eldoria under the guise of spreading "civilization" and "progress." Generous government subsidies made the journey affordable, and the promise of opportunity in Eldoria's untapped lands enticed millions of settlers. Entire families uprooted their lives, drawn by the prospect of wealth and a brighter future.

At first, the settlers assimilated peacefully, taking up roles as farmers, merchants, and laborers. But as their numbers swelled, the true intent of the Empire's plan became clear. The settlers formed tight-knit communities, maintaining their language, religion, and cultural practices. By design, they relied heavily on Eldoria's well-established welfare system, funneling resources into their own expanding enclaves.

The settlers' high birth rate contrasted sharply with the falling native birth rate. The rising cost of living—a direct result of the settlers' sheer numbers—crippled Eldorian families. Housing shortages drove up rents, and food prices soared as fertile land was acquired by the newcomers. Over a few generations, the Eldorian birth rate fell far below replacement levels. Eldorian families had fewer children, struggling to afford the cost of raising them.

The settlers, meanwhile, thrived. Unburdened by the same economic pressures, they expanded their numbers rapidly. They also became adept at exploiting Eldoria's legal loopholes and the black market, funneling wealth back into their communities. Slowly, they began to infiltrate positions of influence: local councils, law enforcement, and the judiciary. Over time, they occupied the seats of power in Eldoria's parliament itself.

The coup de grâce came when international conventions, established under the

guise of protecting minority rights, were leveraged by the settlers to implement their own laws and customs. These new laws favored the settlers' cultural practices and religious doctrines, marginalizing the native population. Over time, Eldorian traditions and language were eroded, dismissed as relics of a bygone era.

The remaining native Eldorians—now a dwindling minority—faced persecution. Eldorian children were forced to adopt the language and customs of the settlers in schools. Traditional Eldorian festivals were banned, replaced by celebrations of the settlers' triumphs. Land ownership laws were rewritten, stripping Eldorians of their ancestral homes. Those who resisted were branded as dissidents and faced imprisonment or worse.

By the mid-21st century, Eldoria was no longer the land of its forebears. It had become a de facto colony of the Western Empire. The native Eldorians, now a footnote in their own history, watched helplessly as their homeland was subsumed into the Empire's dominion.

The plan had succeeded—not with armies or gunfire, but with the slow, calculated erosion of a people. Eldoria, once a proud and independent nation, had been undone by the quiet weapon of demographic conquest. And the Empire, rich with Eldoria's resources, stood as a monument to a new kind of imperialism: conquest not by the sword, but by the shadow.