

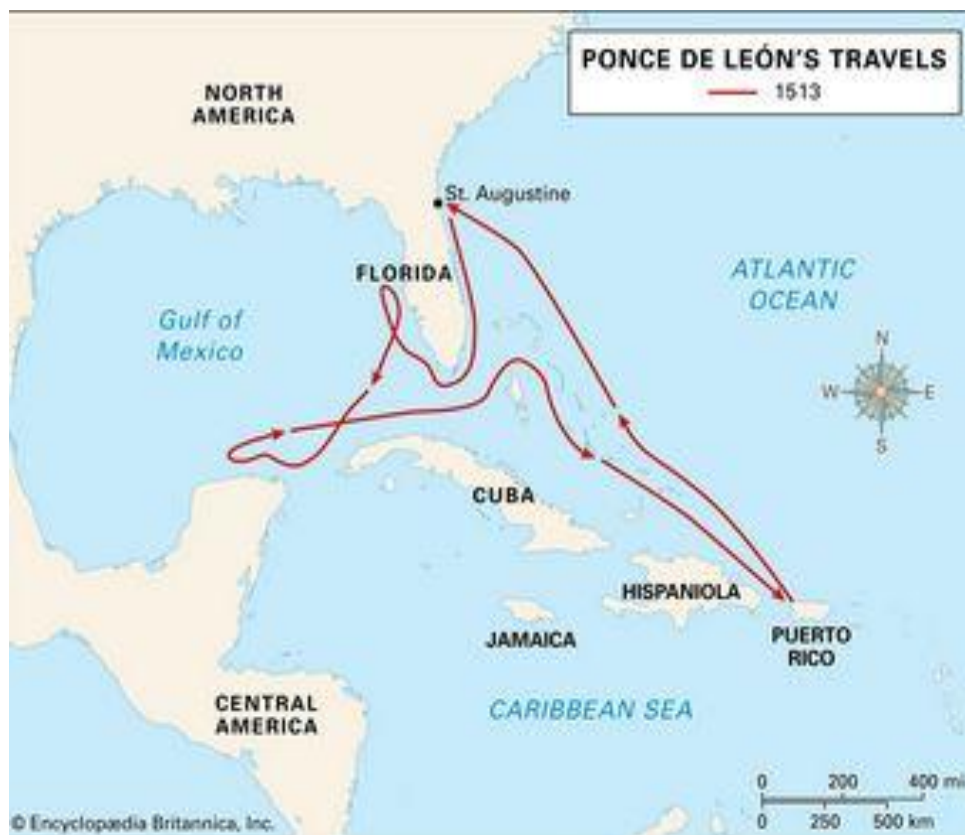
CONTACT AND EXPLORATIONS (LATE 15TH AND 16TH CENTURIES)

1. European Contact with the New World

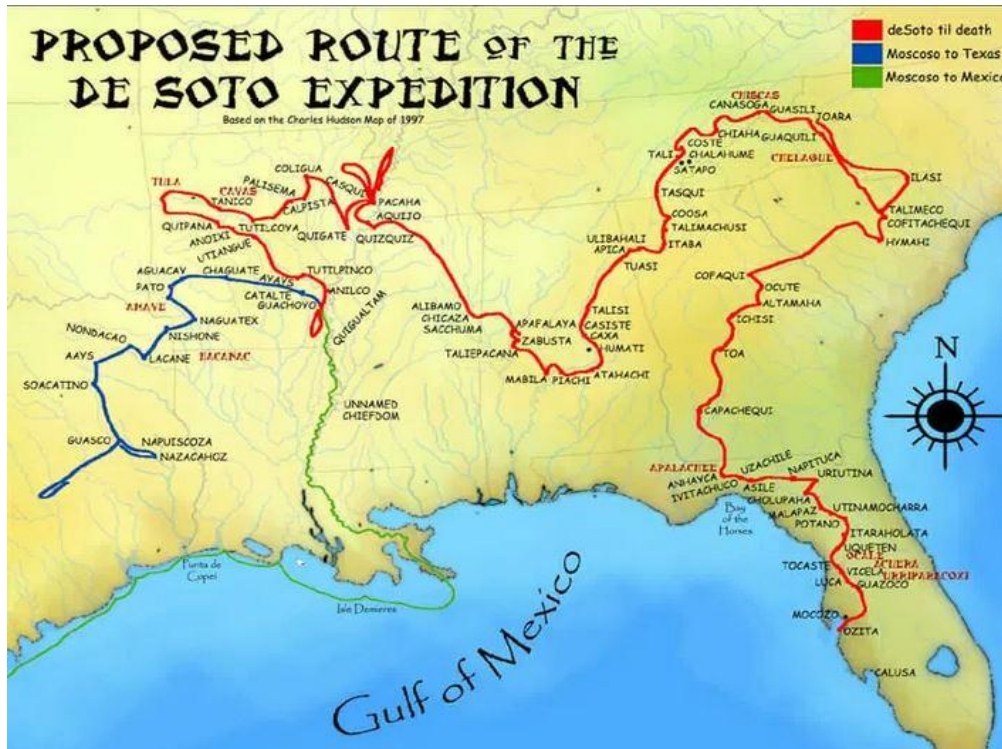
In 1492, Christopher Columbus, trying to find a new route to Asia, stumbled upon America. That **contact** with a "New World," unleashed waves of explorations, conquests, and settlements. The kingdoms of Spain, Portugal, France, and England competed in their attempts to explore control those new lands on that new continent. European competition and rivalry over the New World lasted centuries.

Spanish Explorations

In 1513, **Juan Ponce de León** led an expedition to **Florida**, becoming the first European to explore the area in the Southeast of what is now the United States. **He claimed the land for Spain** and named it "**La Florida**." Ponce de León's exploration of Florida paved the way for future Spanish expeditions and colonization efforts in the region. While he did not find the Fountain of Youth, his expedition contributed to European knowledge of the geography of the southeastern United States.



Between **1539** and **1542**, Spanish explorer **Hernando De Soto** moved across what are now the southern states, up to Texas. De Soto and his men explored parts of present-day Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas, encountering various indigenous peoples along the way. Before the end of the 16th century, the Spaniards planted the first European settlements in North America: **St Augustine** in Florida and **Santa Fé** in New Mexico.



Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, in search of legendary treasures, led an expedition in 1540-1542, commissioned by the Spanish viceroy in New Spain (Mexico). His expedition traveled through the **Southwest** of what is now the United States: present-day Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas, encountering various indigenous peoples such as the Pueblo, Apache, and Wichita.



English Explorations

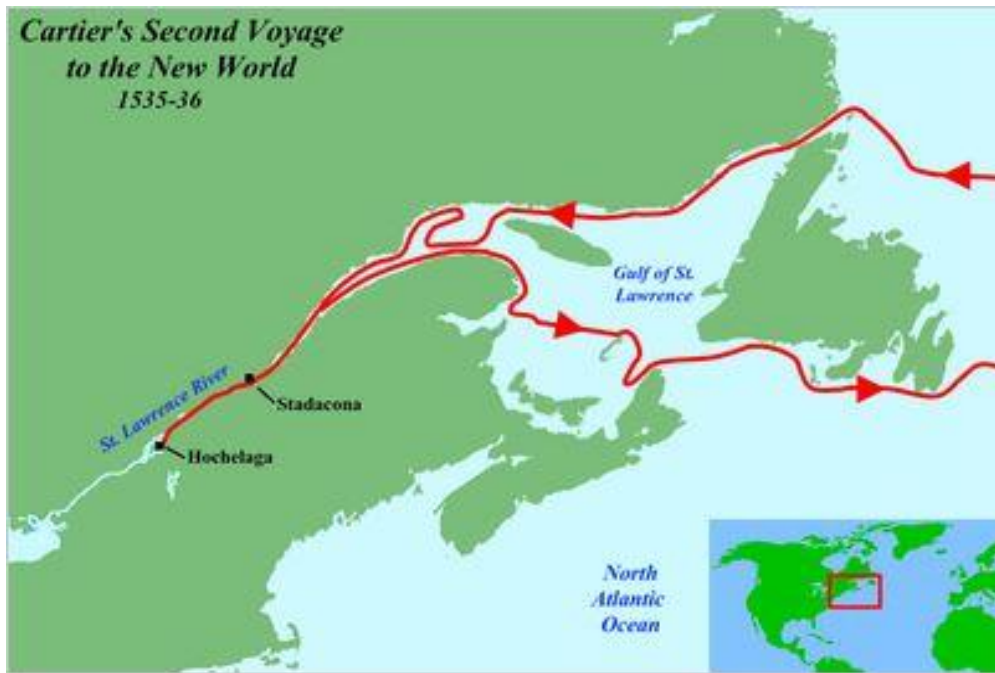
The English tried very early to explore the New World. **John Cabot** (Giovanni Caboto), was an Italian explorer who sailed under the English flag. In **1497 and 1499**, Cabot was commissioned by Henry VII (Tudor) to find westward route to Asia.. He embarked on a voyage across the Atlantic and he landed somewhere along the coast of North America, likely in Newfoundland. Cabot's expedition established English claims to parts of North America. While his voyage did not lead to immediate colonization efforts, it laid the groundwork for subsequent English exploration and eventual settlement in the region.

In **1587**, Sir **Walter Raleigh**, under a patent of Queen Elizabeth, sent an expedition to the island of **Roanoke**, off the coast of North Carolina. His unfortunate colonists had been swallowed up in the woods, leaving behind no clue as to their fate. Yet his efforts had aroused among his countrymen an interest which was soon to ensure success.

French Explorations

French sailor and explorer **Jacques Cartier**, commissioned by King Francis I in **1535**, discovered the site of nowadays Montreal and named the St Lawrence River.

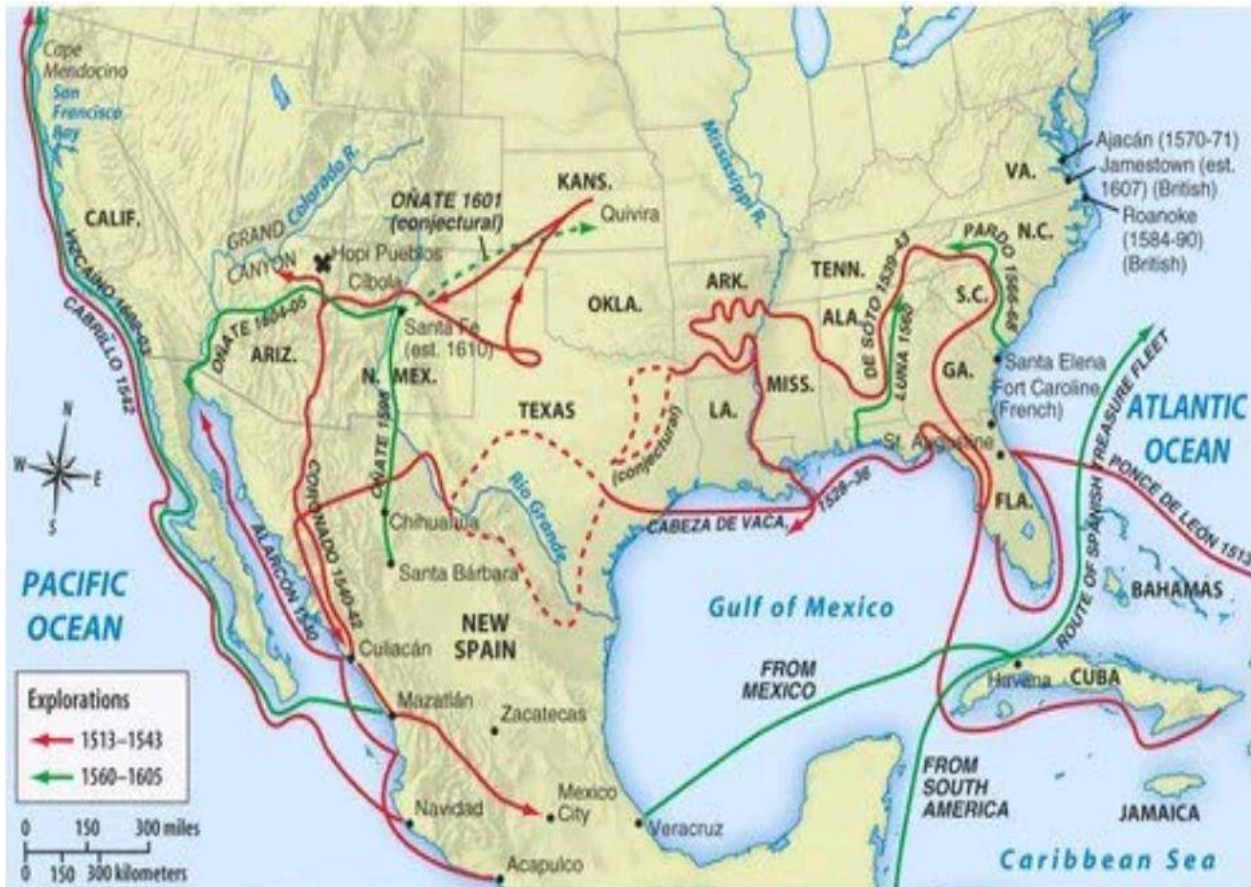
Samuel de Champlain made multiple voyages to the New World **beginning in 1603**, exploring and mapping the northeastern coast of North America. **In 1608**, he founded **Quebec City**, establishing the first permanent French settlement in Canada. Champlain also explored the interior of the continent, mapping the **Great Lakes region** and establishing alliances with indigenous peoples such as the Huron and Algonquin



Explorations Routes



Spanish Explorations in North America



2. European Competition in the New World and the Laws of Discovery

The "**Laws of Discovery**" refer to the principles and legal frameworks that governed European exploration and colonization during the Ages of Discovery and Exploration. These laws were established by European monarchies **to regulate the activities of explorers and colonizers and to assert their claims over newly discovered territories.**

Doctrine of Discovery: This was a legal concept originating from European Christian nations in the 15th century. It asserted that Christian monarchs had the right to claim and colonize lands that were "discovered" by their explorers. This doctrine was used to justify the colonization of indigenous lands in the Americas, Africa, and Asia, often at the expense of indigenous peoples who were already living there.

European powers - mainly Spain, Portugal, England, and France - sometimes negotiated **treaties and agreements** with each other to delineate their **spheres of influence** in newly discovered territories. For example, the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) divided the newly discovered lands outside Europe between Spain and Portugal along a meridian 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde islands (off the west coast of Africa). This treaty aimed to resolve conflicts between the two powers over their respective claims in the Americas.

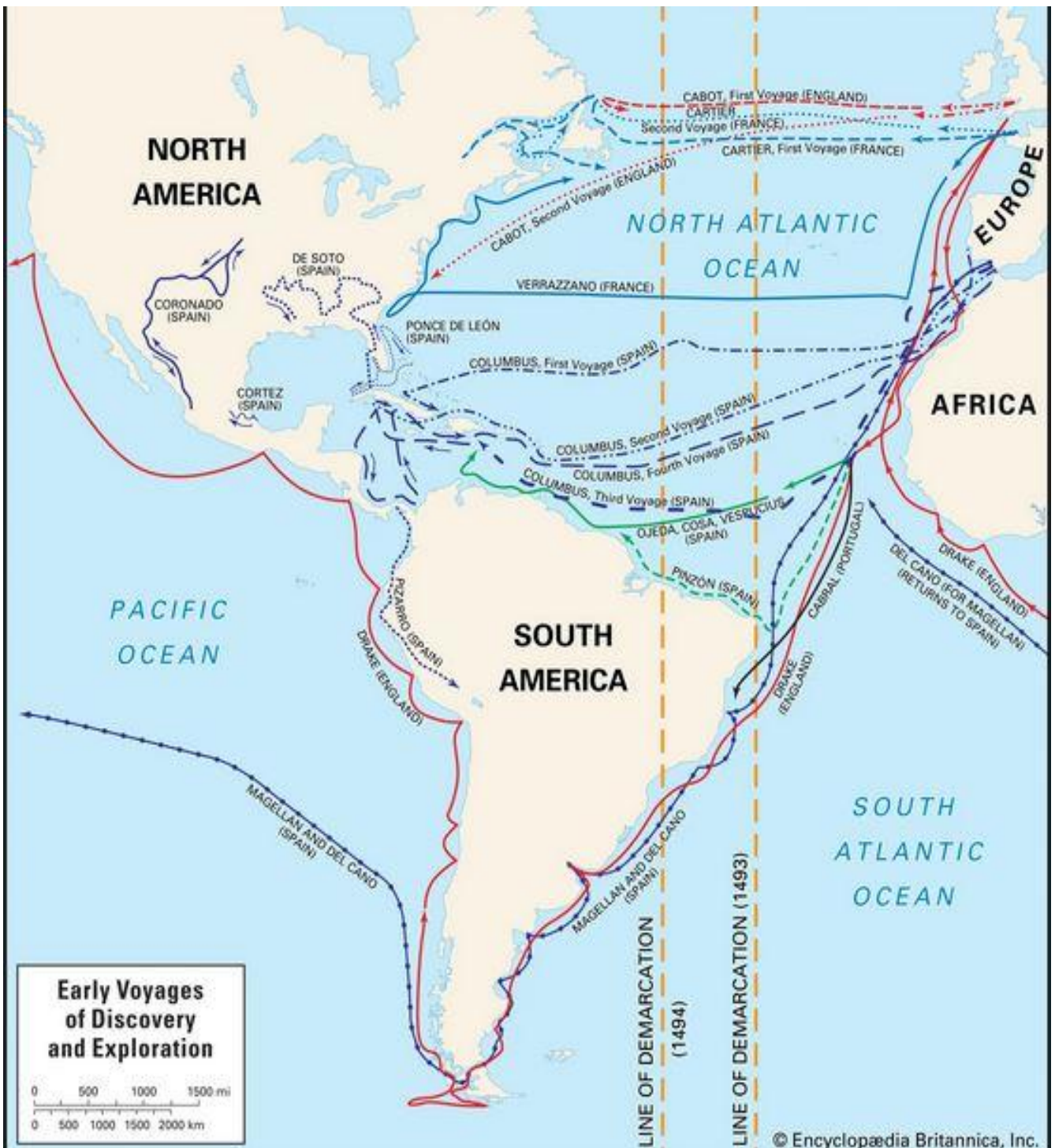
Letters of Marque and Reprisal were official documents issued by governments to **privateers**, authorizing them to attack and capture enemy ships during times of war. Privateers operated under the legal authority of their home government and were permitted to

seize enemy vessels and cargo as prizes of war. This practice allowed governments to disrupt enemy trade and assert control over maritime routes without committing significant naval resources.

One of the most famous privateers was English **Sir Francis Drake**. He was a sailor, a naval commander, and an explorer. He was commissioned Queen Elizabeth I to conduct raids on Spanish ships and settlements in the Americas. He led multiple expeditions to the Caribbean and South America, and he captured Spanish treasure and disrupted Spanish trade routes. Another of Drake's most famous achievements was his circumnavigation of the globe. In 1577, he set sail from England with a fleet of five ships to explore new territories.

European monarchs granted **colonial charters** to individuals or companies, giving them permission to establish colonies in specific regions. These charters outlined the rights and responsibilities of the colonizers and often granted them exclusive trading privileges and land rights in the colonies.

European colonial powers often imposed laws and regulations on indigenous populations in newly conquered territories. These laws varied widely but often aimed to subjugate indigenous peoples, enforce **religious conversion**, **regulate trade**, and **exploit labor**.



3. The Columbian Exchange

The European **contact** with what they later called the "New World" and then they called "America" had profound impact and enduring consequences on both worlds, the New, and the Old (Europe).

One of the most important impact of the European contact with the "New World" was **the Columbian Exchange (or Interchange)**. It refers to the **widespread exchange of animals, plants, culture, human populations, technology, and ideas** between the Americas and the Old World (Europe, Asia, and Africa) following the voyage of Christopher Columbus in 1492. That exchange had significant and far-reaching impacts on the societies and ecosystems involved.

Critical aspects of the Columbian Exchange

Exchange of plants and animals: Europeans brought crops such as wheat, rice, sugarcane, and various livestock like horses, cattle, and pigs to the Americas. In return, Native Americans introduced crops like maize (corn), potatoes, tomatoes, and tobacco to Europe.

Spread of diseases: One of the most tragic aspects of the Columbian Exchange was the transmission of diseases such as smallpox, measles, and influenza from Europe to the Americas, which devastated indigenous populations who had no immunity to these illnesses.

Cultural exchange: The Columbian Exchange facilitated the exchange of ideas, technologies, and cultural practices between the Old World and the New World. This included the transfer of architectural styles, languages, religious beliefs, and social customs.

Impact on biodiversity: The introduction of non-native species to different regions led to changes in ecosystems and biodiversity. Some species, like horses, flourished in their new environments, while others became invasive and disrupted local ecosystems.

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