

The Effects of Colonialism in Africa Cause and Effect Essay

What were the negative consequences of colonial rule for the African continent? The essay below explores this question in great detail. Read on to find out more about the negative effects of European presence in Ghana, Zimbabwe, and other African countries.

Colonialism in Africa started in the 17th century and came to a halt in the 19th century. The colonizers in Africa were mainly the European countries, and the effect of this colonialism is still felt today.

The main reason for colonization was in order for the Europeans to acquire raw materials for their industries in Europe, although they claimed that they were on a mission to civilize the Africans (Boahen 20). African colonization resulted in great negative impacts on the economy, social and political system of African States.

The greatest negative impact of colonization was the exploitation of natural resources by foreigners which did not benefit the local communities but instead the colonizers. To gain access to the natural resources, there was major landscaping, which destroyed the otherwise peaceful lifestyle of the locals.

Forests were cleared to get timber for ship-building and the construction of houses in Europe. Trees were also cut down to provide firewood that was needed to power the steam engine trains. In addition, the trees cut down provided wood which was used to construct rail tracks.

All these activities destroyed huge tracts of forests in the African colonies, and the effects were almost catastrophic. The cutting down of trees resulted in increased soil erosion since most forest cover was destroyed. Soil erosion led to siltation in rivers that greatly affected fishing activities. The communities that relied on fishing suffered the consequences of siltation because fish greatly reduced in numbers in the affected areas.

The cutting down of trees contributed greatly to the negative impacts of the climate on the African continent. The cutting down of trees reduced the amount of rainfall received in African states and also altered the wet and dry seasons, which has made it difficult for farmers to predict when it will rain and thus not able to determine when to plant.

Colonialism also disrupted the way of living of local communities and the development of local societies. During the colonization process, communities had to be moved and relocated to create white settlement areas for large-scale farming. This was the fertile areas where the locals derived their livelihood. This movement was always done without consulting the local communities, and they were always resettled in areas where it was less productive or less fertile. Any resistance to such resettlement resulted in death.

Colonization also brought about different types of diseases. Some of the diseases were not common in the local communities. An example of such a disease that was introduced by the

settlers is Rinderpest disease which affected the livestock of the Shona people of present-day Zimbabwe and Botswana.

Moreover, jiggers which are even nowadays menace in many parts of East African regions, were brought by the Indian workers who played a pivotal role in the construction of the railway line that links Kenya port and Uganda. In South Rhodesian (present-day Zimbabwe), the colonizers deliberately infected the local communities with different diseases to eliminate them and their livestock. Anthrax bacteria were used or put into the rivers so as to impoverish the locals by reducing their population and their animals.

Chamberlin (10) argued that during the scramble for Africa in 1885, the European powers divided the African continent into colonies for themselves, which led to an artificial creation of national boundaries. The boundaries were arbitrary, and the locals were not consulted or taken into consideration. A boundary could run through the middle of one community, and several communities with different cultural practices were under one colony.

This led to the loss of sovereignty and the right to control their own destiny and to play a role in their own development or even conduct their own diplomacy and management of their resources. These boundaries led to the creation of present-day independent states of Africa. Their effects are still felt today in the form of conflicts among communities in a country. Some have even led to coups and even genocides, as was experienced in Rwanda in 1994.

Imposing coercive and repression state rule by the colonialists completely destroyed the system of leadership that existed there before. The local societies were initially stable with their own system of governance and well-structured cultural norms and institutions.

According to Ilffe (7), the colonialists imposed their own leadership on the people by selecting their preferred people to rule over people. They introduced subdivisions of land ownership, where everybody owned a piece of land for cultivation and other activities. There before, communities were used to communal land ownership. The land was owned by the community, and everything was looked at from a communal perspective.

Colonization introduced capitalism in Africa, which had never existed before. After independence in the 1960s, the same leaders who were imposed on the locals and who were always viewed as collaborators with the Whiteman were the ones who took over leadership and acquired a lot of wealth for themselves. This leadership allowed a concession to companies from former colonial masters to continue doing their business to date.

These companies are involved in several sectors of the economy, varying from mining to transport and farming. The concession established runs up to 999 years (Shillinton 74). This has led to local communities feeling that the present leaders as perpetrating the same interest of the colonialists. Neo-colonialism is the new term that is being used to refer to the present colonialist.

The same has resulted in the formation of movements, such as second liberation, by dissenting communities who feel they are disenfranchised, are wallowing in poverty, and are unable to afford a good education for their children like those who are in leadership.

Colonialism too set a pace for urbanization in Africa and which has been accompanied by the emergence of many social evils. Some of the challenges that are associated with urbanization include the growth of slums and increases in crime in urban centers in Africa. The government has tried to come up with solutions, but they have not been successful in curbing the challenges. Poverty is also rampant, both in urban and rural areas.

Such levels of poverty were not widespread in the pre-colonial days since the community took care of all the members of the community. The initiation of urbanization facilitated rural-urban migrations, resulting in most young people migrating from rural areas to urban areas to look for white color jobs and employment in industries as laborers.

Those people that are not successful in securing employment opportunities in the urban areas often engage in criminal activities to earn their livelihood. Others engage in prostitution to earn their daily bread. This has resulted in the wide spread of HIV/AIDs in African States (Magnet 19).

Colonialism had a negative impact in the economies and social systems of the African states; most of them are still felt today, and the effects reverberate into the future for many years to come. Some of the negative impacts that are associated with colonization include; the degradation of natural resources, capitalism, urbanization, and the introduction of foreign diseases to livestock and humans. Change of the social systems of living. Nevertheless, colonialism too impacted positively on the economies and social systems.

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