

The Impoverishment of African Nations and Societies

Colonial Period - Post Colonial period

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Slave Trade

The Atlantic slave trade had many short and long-term impacts on Africa, such as the impoverishment of African nations and societies. This effectively ruined their social structures and collective learning turning tribes and kingdoms against each other by creating a slave-based economy.

Slaves were traded for weapons and new technology along the west African coast. This gave certain tribes access to firearms and gave them a distinct advantage against other tribes.

Slavery in Africa prior to the Atlantic slave trade and European intervention was very different. The Slave trade in the Americas was chattel slavery which means that one person has complete control and ownership over someone. The idea is that people can be property. While the slave trade in Africa prior to the Atlantic slave trade didn't necessarily treat people like property and there was a chance to gain your freedom over time. Educated slaves could have positions of power and jobs that required responsibility while slaves in the Americas brought through the Atlantic slave trade were intentionally not educated and forced to work the hard manual labor jobs and fieldwork nobody else wanted to do.

Slave Based Economy

A slave-based economy made it that West African nations who traded slaves with Europeans got weapons and other lucrative trade items putting them in a position of power over other tribes who lack trading capabilities and firearms technology. This subsequently led to those same factions using these advantages to exploit other weaker tribes and groups of people and sell them into slavery.

Capitalism plays a large role in this. Profits above everything else.

Transformed Africa's economy to a mono- cultural economy meaning they eventually relied heavily on the slave trade as a means of keeping their economy going.

Long Term Effects And Consequences

Decimation of population through slave trade, wars, and more

More conflicts over scarcity of resources which perpetuate a never ending cycle. Resources in a given region are scarce so a conflict between competing groups emerges. Eventually, one group will win and take the resources from the weaker groups who lost, thus creating more scarcity.

Scramble For Africa

Berlin Conference: The aim of the Berlin Conference was to divide up colonial holdings in Africa and ensure that the imperial powers wouldn't be fighting each other in the process. The great powers of Europe regulated colonization and trade in the African continent and had a larger presence in the region.

Resources extraction: The main reason Europe wanted colonial holdings in Africa was because of its resource rich lands. Labourers would extract the resources and colonial shipping would send them back to Europe. Imperial powers impoverished African societies by taking all their valuable resources and manpower. The native population was taken advantage of as a labour force and used to extract the lands resources at no benefit to themselves.

Colonialism

The Congo under King Leopold II was a harsh reminder of the exploitative nature of colonialism in Africa. The native people were enslaved and worked to death extracting rubber to send back to Belgium. The land was nationalized and the state of Belgium and private company owners had free reign over the land having no restrictions or judicial interference. This led to forced labour and violent coercions all for the sake of maximizing profits in the rubber trade. Beatings and mutilations were all too common as proof was required for shooting a laborer for non compliance by this I mean the “force publique” were required to cut off a hand of their victims to prove that they executed them. This was because the colonials were scared that the “public force” might save European munitions up in stock piles and eventually mutiny.

Neocolonialism

Neocolonialism is the deliberate and continued survival of the colonial system in independent African states, by turning these states into victims of political, mental, economic, social, military and technical forms of domination carried out through indirect and subtle means that did not include direct violence.

Cold War and the Truman Doctrine: Some suggest that the Truman doctrine is a form of Neocolonialism as in America would offer money to smaller undeveloped nations in a attempt to add them to the American sphere of influence.

The method and praxis of neocolonialism lies in its guise to enjoin leaders of the independent colonies to accept developmental aids and support through which the imperial powers continue to penetrate and control their ex-colonies. Through the guise of developmental aids and support, technological and scientific assistance, the ex-colonial masters impose their hegemonic political and cultural control in the form of neocolonialism .

Why Is Africa Poor When it is Rich in Natural Resources

Multinational corporations control the land and means of production of resources in Africa.

More money comes out of the developing world than what is invested. The investments made aren't for the sake of the people living on the land but the industrialists and their factories.

Privatization of Natural Resources

As the economies of developing nations fall apart the last option they have is to sell mines, oil fields, and other resources rich lands to private investors and companies. This happens when nations of the developing world have debt so large that the world bank and the international monetary fund (IMF) will not offer them any more lines of credit. Because of this they have to sell their lands that have valuable minerals, metal ore, or other commodities in an attempt to save their economy. Subsequently this means most of Africa's valuable resources and means of production are not controlled by Africans but by private business owners.

Long Term Effects

This practice has made it so that more money is coming out of the developing world than the money that foreign investors put into it. Basically the first world is using legal business practices to assume colonial rule over nations that are smaller and weaker by creating a financial dependence between the developing world and first world so to speak. Once this financial dependence is made it is exploited until the developing nation has no choice but to sell its assets to maintain its fragile economy.

Conclusion

The impoverishment of African nations and societies started with the atlantic slave trade as West African Trading Empires sought to fill their coffers with more technology and riches, but subsequently this led to the destabilization of the African economy and led to the creation of a Slave based economy thus changing African society. Nations on the coast would raid other tribes and take captives to sell as slaves in exchange for fire arms and riches. This led a weaker destabilized Africa. Sacristy led to conflict which led to more scarcity in a never ending cycle. Colonialism became more prominent with the Berlin Conference and that regulated imperial expansion and gave clear rules on how Imperial powers would conduct themselves. This was all aimed at exploiting the natural resources of the colonies and making the mother countries rich while decimating Africa. Today such practices still exist through private business controlling African resources and the means of their production. With organizations such as the IMF and World Bank playing a huge role in how private business owners gain control of African assets through Neocolonialism.

Sources

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