

# Research paper on imperialism in east africa

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## **What is Imperialism?**

Imperialism refers to the practice of a powerful nation occupying a weaker nation and taking charge of its politics, economy and culture. Post industrial revolution, it had been a common tactic implemented by European nations to subjugate the people and places of a less powerful nation through colonization. Examples of imperialism include British colonization of India for 200 years, Japan colonization over the West Pacific before World War I and so on.

## **Effects of Imperialism on Africa**

At the peak of Industrial Revolution in Europe, a string of European nations including Great Britain, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Russia and France discovered Africa as a rich source for raw materials and they invaded, occupied, colonized and annexed the African territory during the period of New Imperialism, between 1881 and 1914. Consequently, the political and economic scramble started among the European nations over the occupation of Africa, leading to its partitioning. European imperialism left deep-seated impacts in Africa. The political impacts left by the imperialism in Africa bred both positive and negative outcome. Firstly, a more efficient administrative system was instated by the colonial powers in the country, resulting in a more systematic government and organized political system. Many African countries are still run by the same political system that the colonial powers introduced during the heydays of imperialism. Concepts like constitution and democracy were introduced and so was the idea of nationalism which eventually led to many wars, revolutions and bloodbaths in Africa.

The economic effects of imperialism were instrumental in developing Africa as it is today. The colonial powers established many successful industries which led to the growth of industrialization across the African continent. Many of the industrial markets in operation today in Africa began during the era of imperialism. Railroads, sewage system, mail delivery system were introduced. Travel, sanitation and communication were improved. Though the development of industrialization might sound positive today, but the colonial powers at that time exploited the colonies by exporting raw materials at dirt cheap price and then earning profit by selling them at high price. European imperialism also caused racial divide and social distinctions. Frequent wars claimed innumerable lives. Imposition of taxes, occupation of best land by the whites resulted in poorer condition of Africans who couldn't make their ends meet. The brutality unleashed on African laborers by the colonialists is inexplicable and the introduction of ideas and the development of industrialization cannot make up for the African lives that were lost due to imperialism.

## **Colonization of East Africa**

The British and German colonialists employed various methods to rule over East Africa. They used Christian missionaries to brainwash the native Africans with the preaching of love and brotherhood so that they began to believe that fighting the Europeans was sinful. They used indirect policy by signing treaties and agreements with the tribal chiefs of Africa. Introduction of such policy helped the European colonials entrust the responsibility of regular government and administration affairs into the hands of tribal chiefs. Further, indirect rule was inexpensive requiring fewer administrative

personnel or military force. They also used the method of divide and rule by introducing varied religions like Protestants, Catholics and Moslems. This way they disintegrated their unity against the Europeans. They used bribery and gifts to convince tribal chiefs and kings to accept their colonial policies. They also used military force to occupy African territories.

## **Emergence of Nationalization**

During WW II a large sense of nationalism started gaining momentum in East Africa. Kings African Rifle (KAR) was formed immediately after the war. They tried to promote middle class employment and privileges. KAR along with Harry Thuku led Kenya African Union. They started movement for giving ownership of fertile lands back to the local people. Due to pressure from KAU and KAR in 1954, the British Crown Colony of East Africa allowed six African representations in the government chosen by the governor. During the same time Mau uprising which was also supported by Kikuyu took an ugly turn and British government killed more than 50, 000 revolutionaries. However, due to these movements finally the British allowed some locals to be included in the prestigious coffee board. Thuku became one of the first African members of the Coffee Union. During 1960 local people wanted to get a democratic government and no longer wanted to be ruled by the British. In 1961 in the first election in Kenya Africa Nationalist Union won maximum number of seats and Kenyatta became the first president.

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