

Impact of british colonization on kenya

[Government](#), [Colonialism](#)



The British colonization of Kenya destroyed the culture and economy of the native people, but it established a democratic government and left Kenya a more modernized country. During the 1880's through 1914, the start of WWI, was an age of imperialism. One place that felt victim to this imperialism was Africa. At this time Africa was a wholly unmodernized continent. The reason the Europeans went after Africa was the introduction of the idea of social Darwinism and the "white man's burden".

Social Darwinism is the belief that only the strongest and the most cunning can make it to the top of the social ladder, and it was the White Man's Burden to step in for these undeveloped countries and lead the Africans for them. So the European powers set out taking all of Africa piece by piece until the start of WWI. After this period there were only 4 African countries left independent, compared to a modern day 50 countries. Britain was one of the most powerful countries at this time and took tons of land all over the world for trading and exports. Kenya is a country founded on over 70 different cultural groups, and each one has their own language and cultural traditions. When the British came into Kenya, they knew very little to none of the culture of the Native Kenyan people. This of course led to numerous problems between the two peoples. One of the biggest problems created was how much land the British took. The Massai people lived in the rift valley, and were a nomadic tribe. When the British came in, they figured that the land that the Massai weren't living in, wasn't being used and took it for themselves. Because of this, the Massai could no longer live their nomadic lifestyle and were forced to move to the cities, primarily Nairobi. This overpopulated the city and led to mass homelessness and unemployment,

and therefore these people could no longer pay the British taxes. The British took advantage of this and employed these people to work on streets and railroads. As the British took more land, more natives were forced to move to the city. So the British began to employ these people to work on their farms.

Due to all these changes, the economic state of the country changed from one where everyone had a home and job in their own tribe and enjoyed fairly good standards of living, to one driven by foreign consumerism and trade. These economic disruptions were not the only result of the settler's lack of knowledge of the Kenyan People they had a profound Social effect as well. When the British first came they were afraid of two things of the Kenyans. Firstly they thought that the Kenyan people were savage and, without supervision and control, would resort to fighting over the slightest problem. They also feared that the Kenyan people may unite against the British and repel them from the country. To prevent either of those from happening, they established " Tribal Boundaries". These boundaries separated each tribe into their own separate province or district, which was easier to manage and watch over. These boundaries had a more dramatic effect than the British could know. Before the British came the economy was mostly agricultural, with a few tribes taking jobs as merchants allowing trade between the tribes. With these Boundaries in place, no Kenyan was allowed to cross any border without accompaniment of a white man. This prevented most, if not all, of the normal economy the native Kenyans had. Without the other tribes to trade with, the individual tribes had to become more self sufficient and focus more on having enough food to survive, than worrying about the British. People that couldn't get any land, or failed at farming had

to work on British civil works project, and on their plantations and in their mines.

Despite all the negative impacts that the British colonization had, there were undoubtedly some benefits Kenya gained. There are some obvious ones, such as improved transportation via streets and railroads, and established trade routes with other countries. Other than those though, there were some major contributions made that still effect the country today. One such contribution was the Lyttleton Multiracial Constitution, which was imposed after the Mau Mau crisis, as a way to appease the kikuyu rebels.

This constitution was the first step on the way to establishing a better relationship between the natives and the settlers. This constitution, created by the British, established a council, made up of legislators elected by all the people of Kenya, which would make decisions on the future of the country. This was established because the numerous cultural groups of Kenya had trouble agreeing on decisions for the country, as each tribe wanted changes to better their own tribe. The British established this to help the native Kenyan people, instead of taking advantage of them.

This went a long way toward bettering the relationship between the two peoples. 6 years later the Macleod Constitution was established. This created an African majority in the council that gave the Kenyan's more power over the Settlers. It also gave each tribe a share of the power in the council, much like the state representatives we have in our congress; each tribe had a different share of the power based on size. The tribes with more people had more representatives in the council, and therefore more power. With these

two constitutions, the Kenyan people were well on their way to becoming an independent nation. Even after all the work the Europeans had done to try to establish an orderly government in Kenya, only 4 years after it was established a Tyrant took over and dominated the country up until we know it today. After Kenyatta died, Daniel Arap Moi took his place as president. At this time the constitution was weak and at its most basic level. Moi took advantage of this as established himself as ruler for life of Kenya. There were multiple attempts both at his life, and his positions as president, but none were ever successful.

Only in 2002 did his reign end, with the election of Mwai Kabaki. Mwai improved the country a great deal in all areas of life. He established trade routes with other countries, and welcomed foreign investment. By 2004 he had raised over \$1 billion (American dollars). Unfortunately, the amount of money invested in Kenya has gone down as more countries begin to invest more into Uganda and Tanzania. Today, Mwai Kabasi still rules as president of Kenya.

- Mau Mau Uprising Creates Havoc in Kenya, October 20, 1952.
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