

British empire a force for good or evil history essay

[History](#), [Empires](#)



At its highest point of robustness, the British Empire was the largest ever. Indeed the world has never witnessed another empire as vast and great as the British Empire. The empire was divided into two. The first part of the empire revolved the British colonies in America that were popularly known as the thirteen colonies. These gained independence from the Britain in 1783. The second part of the empire which developed from the first empire came later. It started during the Napoleonic wars and survived through the nineteenth century the first half of the twentieth century. In fact, the British withdrew from its last colony Hong Kong in 1997. It developed from India and spun to regions of Africa and Australia. The influence and the power of the empire spun around the world shaping it in different ways. This influence is still evident in many places that fell were under its control (Ferguso, 2004) This empire just like other numerous empire before it and after it had triumphs and humiliations, spread man good things as well as inflicted bad thing or influence as it spread across the globe.

The Good aspects of the empire

The British Empire spread great benefits or good thing to the areas that were under its influence. First, the British having been ahead in industrial evolution helped spread technology to new places in the world. Particularly, the British Empire was responsible for the development of early industries in their colonies (Balasubramanyam & Wei, 79). The British were instrumental to the development of early infrastructure in the colonies. For instance, they constructed roads and rails to ease transportation of goods and services. For instance, the British developed the Suez canal and important sea passage

from Europe to India; developed 70, 000 mile of paved road 40, 000 miles of railroad in India and others (Iyer, 20004).

Second the British through their empire introduced new agricultural techniques in their colonies. Alongside these technologies, they also introduced new methods of farming and tremendously improved the production of food and industrial raw material in these colonies (Balasubramanyam & Wei, 79). To improve agriculture further, the British also introduced new crops and livestock varieties to the new lands. For instance, they enhance the grown of grains in the Canadian prairies. The legacy still lives on these colonies even after gaining their independence from the British. The agricultural systems have only been modernized; certainly an improvement on what the British started.

The British Empire having trade as one of its reasons for expansion significantly improved trade among her colonies and other part of the world. This significantly led to the introduction of new commodities to these lands consequently influencing the mannerisms of the people in the colonies (Ferguson, et al, 2005). I believe that the British introduction of new commodities in the colonies was an introduction of the consumerism behaviors. Also, the improvement of trade ensures the empire develop an export market for the products of its colonies (Balasubramanyam & Wei, 79).

The British had also developed and modernized the education. In their colonies, they introduced and supported western education systems. For instance, in Africa, the British build new education faculties such as

classrooms and syllabus (Ferguson, et al 2005). Most parts of Africa were reliant on informal education that was conducted by the older members of the society and ran throughout the growth of the child. The British, however, changed this and introduced formal education, taught the residents how to read and write. The early beneficiaries of the new education system would be later absorbed into the British administration systems in the colonies (Ferguson, et al 2005).

The British further introduced their well developed judicial systems and law in these colonies. Most of the British laws were adapted by their colonies or influences the development of laws in these countries. For instance, the American laws and several other former colonies laws have a common law heritage which is a clear indication of the legal influence of the empire.

The British themselves also benefited from running the empires. The colonies provided cheap raw materials for their industries. The vast agricultural land that was to be found in these colonies was very useful for the growing of industrial raw materials such as cotton, coffee and tea. Also, through interaction with many other languages, English broadened vocabularies for other languages as well as enriched the languages with new vocabularies.

The evil aspects of the Empire

Despite such numerous benefits, the British Empire also had numerous negative effects that can be collectively referred to as the evils of the empire. First, the acquisition of the colonies involved inhuman acts of imperialism. The British colony companies always acquired the colonies

through treaties that favored them or made the others independent states become protectorates or colonies. In place where these companies met resistance, military force was used to stamp authority over the resilient indigenous communities (Chin, 2004). Many people were killed in these wars while some were locked up in cells. Human rights were totally violated.

The British alienated local from the land and resources. In most places the British pushed the locals in their new colonies to reserved and grabbed most of the fertile and productive land. Such alienation lead to resentment within in the indigenous people in these colonies and according to Marker (2003) most of them started nationalistic movements that demanded for freedom and liberation from the colonization. Furthermore, theses nationalistic movement encouraged the British to fight back since they did not want to lose the colonies (Ferguson, 2004). These further lead to liberation wars leading to suffering and deaths of many citizens.

The introduction of the western culture and industries had negative effects no the local culture and domestic or cottage industries. Most of the local cultures in many colonies were eroded and in some place it remains to be read on in books. The new form of education, administration and religion all served to undermine the local counterpart (Marker, 2003). As a result, most of the generation born when their lands were under the influence of the empire adapted the western mannerisms. Similarly the introduction of new judicial systems and the common laws ensured that the local arbitration systems were totally washed away. The colonies went ahead after independence to use the common laws and the aspect of the British

constitutions which on some cases could not meet the unique legal needs of the colonies. The cottage industries on the other hand could not survive the superiority of the new mechanized industries.

The British also incurred numerous costs in running its colonies since, whenever it acquired a new colony; it puts in place new mechanisms to manage the colonies. According to Glenn (2008) these included administrators at all level of government which was very costly. The administration also ensured that the colonized could not rise in ranks thus making it biased. Certainly, managing an overseas empire is very challenging and expensive (Glenn, 2008).

Conclusion

The British Empire certainly had numerous impact the outlived its existence. In deed as it was believed “ the sun never sets” on the empire. It is effect live on and continues to influence its former colonies. The empire effects were both positive and negative and affect both Britain and her colonies. The empire introduced new technology agricultural practices, industries infrastructure, education, religion, administration systems and court systems. Despite benefiting the locals they serve various atrocities such deaths during imperialist and nationalistic wars, erosion of culture, introduction of new religion and cottage industries. Britain herself despite getting market for her manufactured goods and raw materials for her industries incurred huge cost.