

Colonialism, Modernity and Africa

Description

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[Motivational speaker](#)

Black Africa is the poorest part of the world by far. When African governments are not openly plundering their nations economy, they are simply incompetent. The argument that colonization accounts for Africa's poverty is so easily refuted that it should have gone out of currency long ago. That it has not can be attributed only to the apparently endless capacity of whites to accept arguments that paint them as villain.

To believe that colonization thwarted the economic development of Africa is to believe that indigenous societies were on their way towards prosperity but were brutally shoved off course by Europeans. Every year, thousands of Africans die of starvation. In bad years, hundreds of thousands starve. Even in tropical parts of Africa untouched by famine, as many as one third of all children die before the age of five. One in a hundred births kills the mother. Malaria, sleeping sickness, hepatitis, leprosy, and AIDS are rampant. Nevertheless, the population of Africa grows faster than that of any other region of the world. The total number of children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren that an average woman from a developed world will have is 14. The equivalent figure for the average African woman is approximately 258! Despite the ravages of disease, starvation, and inter-tribal warfare, Africa's population increases by more than three percent a year. At that rate, populations can double in 20 years. When most of Africa became independent, the region exported food. Now, it devours more than \$1 billion a year in Western food aid, and thousands still starve.

It is possible to argue that Africans might have been better off if they had been left entirely alone. This is to take a romantic view of the disease, tribal warfare, slavery, and ignorance that were widespread on the continent. Moreover, no African group that has glimpsed the possibilities of Western progress has opted to return to purely African primitivism. This suggests that Africans themselves would rather have the benefits of Western technology than do without them.

Given that people naturally yearn for medical advance and material progress, colonization was an obvious and striking benefit to Africa. The benefits are particularly clear in any comparison of those parts of Africa that were colonized with those that were not. In fact, African societies south of the Sahara that had not had contact either with Europeans or with Middle Eastern traders showed no signs of modern development.

No precontact African society had devised a written language or had discovered the wheel. None had a calendar, or built multi-story buildings. No African had learned how to domesticate animals. The smelting of iron was widespread, as was fire-hardened pottery, but the continent did not produce anything that could be called a mechanical device. It was trade with Europeans that introduced modernity to Iron Age Africa.

Far from hobbling and holding the continent back, colonization laid the foundations for whatever evidence of economic progress can now be found in Africa. It was Europeans who built roads and rail lines, introduced piped water, schools and telecommunications, and built national administrations. Nothing suggests that Africans would have achieved any of this on their own. There is no question but that life for Africans improved steadily under colonization.

Africans had no concept of the biological origins of disease, and attributed personal misfortunes to the work of evil spirits. Slavery was widely practiced, and deeply rooted in Africa long before the arrival of Europeans. There is no reason to think that, left to themselves, Africans would have risen from the primitive conditions in which Europeans found them. The European slave trade, though unquestionably harmful to Africa, was hardly the depopulating scourge it is often made out to be. When the 15th century Portuguese began sailing down the coast, they met long-established slave traders keen to sell off surpluses. Europeans almost never went on slaving expeditions into the interior. They bought slaves from dealers, which means that other Africans first enslaved slaves taken from Africa.

For any knowledgeable African who has looked into the question as to 'What lessons can Africa learn from colonization? There seems to be little doubt that Africans have brought misery upon themselves. Whether it be in Africa, Haiti, or Washington (DC), Africans show little evidence of an ability to organize and run a modern economy. Just as economic refugees from Africa working in developed countries like Europe or United States in which they may form a majority community have failed to exercise authority, so have Africans desolated a continent bursting with riches. Of course, it is not permissible to conclude that this is because of natural, genetic handicaps from which blacks suffer, so anti-white arguments inevitably rush in to fill the explanatory void. Blacks the world over, whether they live only among themselves or among people of other races, are said to lead lives of failure and misery only because whites have oppressed them in the past and continue to oppress them in the present. It makes no difference that this explanation falls apart under scrutiny. It is the only one that is permitted because the alternative does not conform to current political dogma. There can be no pleasure in saying so, but the facts point to one conclusion. Whether in Africa or America, Haiti or Great Britain, blacks are poor because they are, for the most part, incapable of lifting themselves from poverty. Africa is poor, just as Harlem is poor, because it is populated by Africans.

Comment: Young black men account for just 3% of the population of the U.S. yet they commit 53% of all murder. 13% of the population receives 39% of the welfare, and 20% of all federal jobs are handed to the 13% of the population that is black. Various schools add 50 points to their SAT scores to make them qualified for entry. Not to mention decades of promotions under affirmative action. How many artificial steps must be provided to the ladder for Africans to be equal?