

Dominance of European Culture

Gary Huang

1 Lamplighter Way, Gill, MA, 01354 PO Box 4138

ABSTRACT: European colonialism is a highly controversial event in history that is still being discussed every day. This paper explains the influence of these events as the world assimilates to European culture in almost all aspects of life. It supports the claim that Europe still indirectly controls how the world operates.

I. INTRODUCTION

Essay:

European colonialism is a major event in world history that still shapes our world today. It happened between 1500 and 1800 where European countries sent explorers to make settlements across Africa and America. Although colonialism had many goals, one of its original aims was to spread Christianity. The mission was successful, and many of the indigenous religions were replaced by Christianity; however, what left a greater impact on the world is the culture and lifestyle of the settlers which has been adopted across the globe. For example, in most of South America and Africa (former European colonies), European languages such as English and French remain as the official language. The political world is also shaped by European countries as they make up the majority of veto powers in the United Nations. As a result, these nations set the rules for the world to follow. For those who do not conform these rules, it becomes difficult for them to compete with other countries economically and politically. Apart from politics, our daily lives are also influenced by European culture. Most important meals also follow a Western etiquette being served with fork and knife. Even though colonialism has ended and colonies were gradually granted their independence, the European countries still shape the modern world in all aspects. The whole world revolves around the political system they set up and most speak the languages that they spoke. Furthermore, it has also influenced on our daily lives from the attire that we wear to the meals that we eat.

As Islam became more popular and European countries did not have anywhere to expand on their own continent, they turned towards the new world to spread Christianity and develop their economy. Starting from 1492, as Columbus discovered the “new” continent, European powers and the United States have continued to exist as the dominant countries and cultures in the world. They developed colonies all over the world in America, Asia, Oceania, and controlled 97% of the land in Africa during the mid 19th Century. Some scholars argue that colonialism benefitted the world because colonies were introduced to the European government system which led to a better economy. Critics say that it had the opposite effect as European reign in colonies stripped natives of their own identity and enslaved them. No definite conclusion can be drawn to that question; however, it cannot be disputed that European colonialism directly led to globalization today as the world assimilates to western standards and these countries still indirectly control how the world operates.

During and after colonialism, European powers gained so much power that they could impact the world on a large scale simply through a brief meeting between the leaders of these nations. The fate of one of the largest and most populous continents of the world, Africa, was decided in the Berlin conference, which many European nations were involved in. The consequence of the decision making at this conference led to centuries of cultural revolts and genocides which still occur to this day. When Europeans decided to split up Africa for colonization, they did not consider cultural and geographic boundaries or the history of the different tribes living in the continent. Moreover, they failed to acknowledge the trade routes that already existed and tribal ownership of lands that spanned these routes. Instead, European powers such as England, Belgium, France, and Germany drew borders based on latitudes, longitudes, and rivers, as if they were splitting a piece of cake. From the 1950s to 1960s, country after country attempted to gain independence in Africa, but European governments were reluctant to let these independence movements succeed. When nations did become independent, they gained independence as countries whose borders were drawn by the Europeans. This led to many civil wars between tribes, coups, and the emergence of brutal military regimes. In an attempt to minimize the amount of force needed to govern their colonies, European leaders gave some tribes the power to rule over others, creating a deep-rooted hatred between the people of these nations. An example of this can be seen in the case of the Rwandan genocide, which in the 1990s led to the massacre of millions of people.

European languages dominate the world in terms of authority, popularity, and usefulness. Decades after independence, many African nations still speak the language of their colonizers. This symbol of Europe's continued dominance shows that much of the world continues to adopt and conform to Western culture. The large number of colonies that England had in the 19th century has contributed to its strong cultural influence of the world today. Although almost all of the colonies are now independent, English remains a "global language" with 1.5 billion people speaking it, more than 20 times of UK's population. Even though the numbers of Hindu and Mandarin speakers are rising exponentially, they do not have many speakers outside of Asia and these languages lack international authority. In China and India, English is also a mandatory subject in school and many people are learning it so it is unlikely that any of these can overtake English. Aside from English, other colonial powers such as Spain and France also left linguistic impressions on their former colonies. French and English are both working languages in the United Nations and many other world organizations such as UNICEF and NATO. Apart from these, other world-wide events such as the World Cup and the Olympics both have French and English as its official languages.

Other than the predominance of European languages, the world's clothing style has also been marked by Western influence. On formal occasions, for example, the standard dress for men is to wear suit and tie, and it would be foolish to wear one's own traditional clothing. Suits originally came from England when kings there wore it; later this type of garment spread to the world through the English colonies. Notably, in 1921, the prince of Japan was getting his suits tailored in London before his grand wedding and he was more or less dressed identically to the prince of England. After centuries of following traditional customs, the Japanese prince decided to completely change the style of his wedding just to be accepted by the Western world. The change in dress code along with other assimilations to Western culture soon made Japan become the most powerful nation in Asia with a booming economy. After that, many countries have been assimilating to Western dressing standards. Even Kim Jong-Un, the current leader of North Korea, is often seen wearing a suit. Furthermore, during China-Africa culture week, leaders wore suits. This is especially interesting given that this style of dress is not native to any of these two places and that the purpose of the event is to exchange their cultures. The change in clothing symbolizes a much bigger idea that the world has already adapted to Western standards in daily life without fully noticing. As Niall Ferguson states, "Are they dressing like us because they want to be like us? Because after all this is about much more than just clothes. It's about a whole popular culture that extends through music and movies and that culture carries with it a subtle message." When the world adopts many European features, it mirrors the culture, customs, and values of European nations that have achieved economic and political success. Some think that Westernization is not happening because China exists as a world power. However, in China, the youth has been incorporating Western culture into their lives ignoring many Chinese traditions that has been built over the last 5 millennia. Studies have shown that many Chinese have chosen to drink coffee instead of tea and it is likely that coffee will overtake tea in a few years and become China's most popular drink. It is mortifying that China's 5000-year old drink that was once longed by the whole world is gradually getting replaced by a crop developed by the Europeans during colonialization. The wealthy neighborhoods of China also have names resembling famous European places such as Edinburgh, Venice, and Berlin which symbolizes people's wish to become Europeanized.

While self-identity, freedom, and culturalism has been at its peak in the 20th and 21st centuries, most people do not realize that their lives have been more or less influenced by European culture. Even though China and India are both world powers that have the potential to establish world dominance, people there look highly upon European culture and are eager for English classes, which they think will lead them to success. Europe remains as the top destination for travel and also a hot spot for immigration. Most European countries today cannot be compared to the U.S or China in terms of political, military, and economical power, but their influence on the modern society will remain and continue to influence successive generations.

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