

The Effects of the British Empire

The British Empire has had an effect on many different countries and Empires throughout history. Many claim that they had effected them for the better or for the worse, but more often than not the British do not want to take any accountability for any violence or harm they may have caused in an effort to keep their reputation untainted. The article "The 'Moral Effect'" was written by Caroline Elkins with the intent to criticise the British government for their denial of systemitized violence that was caused by imperialism and liberalism, Elkins also criticised Steven Pinker for his role in this denial.

Caroline Elkins is a professor of History and of African and African American Studies, the Thomas Henry Carroll/Ford Foundation Professor at Harvard Business School, Affiliated Professor at Harvard Law School, and the Founding Oppenheimer Director of Harvard's Center for African Studies. She is also an author, her first book being *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* and her latest being *Legacy of Violence*. These achievements allow her to approach this subject through an academic lens, specifically through an African studies perspective.

This article was written with the use of memorandums to letters in order to further her argument. The use of documents such as memorandums and the written debates of the house of commons ensures that the evidence being presented by Elkins was exactly as the government presented it. She was able to further her point that the British government was trying to deny the evidence by using what they had published to the public. Some drawbacks would be that since these are government issued papers, what they present in them is to be assumed correct. The use of letters and private papers throughout the article allows for first hand accounts of the events and opinions of those involved in the coercion of cultures by the British government. Elkins had used the letter written by Jamal al-Husani that described the torture inflicted on Arabs in Palestine where they used methods such as "scorching" of body parts with "hot iron rods," "severe beating with lashes," the 'pulling out [of] nails and scorching the skin under them by special appliances,' and the 'pulling of the sexual organs,' showing documentation of violence performed by the British. The weakness of these sources come from them not being factually based papers, they are words that people have written with no proof and could be twisted in a way to either make the British appear more appealing or more violent.

This article contributes to the understanding of British imperialism by proving and evidence-based critique of the British Empire through a unbiased lens, with the author not being apart of the cultures discussed in the article. It provides the evidence for the violence inflicted by the British government and how certain figures have tried to deny these actions. She provided many different instances, such as their violence against Arabs in Palestine or the actions performed during the Irish Civil War, to criticise the way the British Empire handles their affairs. Many of its strengths come from the evidence that was provided throughout the article, such as discussing how "Pinker ignores copious amounts of historical evidence, including countless files documenting Britain's creation and deployment of violent repression in 1930s Palestine and elsewhere in the empire," as well as the academic backing that the author has to be able to educate those reading on the topics introduced. Some weakness provided could also come from her education as with the topics discussed many of them are not primarily centered around Africa they were centered in either Asia or Europe.

The audience intended for this article would be specialists in the field, such as academics studying the British Empire and their past acts of violence. With this audience in

mind, Elkins would be able to educate those who may not be aware or may be in agreeance with the British Empire. Other intended audiences could be political academics or politicians since she is heavily criticising the government throughout this article and condemning their actions of denial. This audience would be forced to face their actions and have to deny the evidence provided. Other articles that discuss related topics generally focus on the British perspective and the issues that arise from their actions withing the country. This article provides the opposing perspective in a way that condemns the actions of the Empire. The aim of this article was achieved throughout as Elkins had provided the intended information to be able to criticise the British Empire. The arguments throughout detail the violence that was performed and provided accounts of those who had witnessed it which furthered the proof of what her argument was intended to be. This work is excellent for furthering education on the topic and holding the British Empire accountable for their actions.

The criticism shown in this article was an effective method of describing the violence suffered by many nations at the hands of the British Empire. These acts of violence have had a lasting effect on the nations effected and the dismissal and refusal to admit to them only enhance the effects. The only way to achieve any sort of reparations for these nations are to uncover the truth and to not allow the British Empire to silence the voices of those effected.

Bibliography

Caroline Elkins, 'The "Moral Effect" of Legalized Lawlessness: Violence in Britain's Twentieth-Century Empire', *Historical Reflections*, 44.1 (2018), pp. 78–90.