

Brain Drain in the Modern World

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In an increasingly interconnected world, migration has become omnipresent with skilled and talented members of the non-Western workforce often looking for job opportunities in Western developed countries, in hopes of a better life. While economic migration has been around for ages, many do not understand one of the socio-economic problems elicited by this phenomenon, namely, “brain drain”. Dei and Asgharzadeh (2002) define brain drain as the emigration of highly talented, qualified workers from the Southern countries to the North (2002). One might ask the question: why is it from “South to North”, if this paper just mentioned economic migration to *Western* countries in the beginning? Is the author confusing her compass? The short answer is: no, and the longer answer is explored by the rest of this paper...

This paper investigates the issue of brain drain and argues that one cause of brain drain is partly embedded in the colonial past of the UK, and can be regarded as a neocolonial action (i.e., an exploitative relationship). This paper shall first familiarize the reader with the brain drain phenomenon, focusing on the United Kingdom (UK) as one of the biggest colonizers in history and its former colonies (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2002). This paper shall subsequently focus on identifying the cause of brain drain and addressing how the UK might contribute to reproducing it.

First, the phenomenon of brain drain has existed for centuries, and is defined as a talented and educated workforce leaving Less Developed Countries (LDCs, or non-industrialized countries) and former colonies of Britain, to emigrate to Western countries,

or, highly developed countries (Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, n.d.).

In the last century, India (until 1947), Hong Kong (until 1997), the ‘Gold Coast’ and many countries in Africa (until 1980) were all under British rule (Price, 2022). Thus, decolonization occurred only recently and many of its effects are evidenced to still be present. For example, at present, Zimbabwe, being one of the former colonies of the UK, is losing a significant number of health professionals due to brain drain. Research shows that there is a Zimbabwean diaspora of 479,348 around the world and the destination for the majority of these people is the UK. Professionals in the health and education sector seem to be the bulk of migrators, with a great majority of respondents having at least a bachelor's or master's degree (Chetsanga, 2003).

Further, research shows that India has lost up to €4.1 billion in investment in the training of doctors since 1951 (Dobson, 2004). This could also be attributed to brain drain. Additionally, the loss of these people is not just measured in monetary terms but also in terms of their “possible contribution to the development of the Indian economy” (Oomman, 1989). The largest migration destinations for Indians are the UK, the U.S.A., and Canada (Oomman, 1989), which further supports the claim that brain drain is a persisting phenomenon. However, brain drain also deprives the countries of future skilled professionals, which equals to the loss of tax income. Further, the loss of innovative ideas is another repercussion of brain drain. Thus, this issue must be addressed at an international level, focusing on what countries can do in order to give voice to the former colonies.

One can argue that the presence of neocolonialism is quite substantial in ex-colonies and that the UK still benefits from the brain power of its former dependent territories. This prompts the question of whether decolonization was genuinely comprehensive, or if brain drain is an

enduring consequence of colonization. To a certain degree, the UK can be held accountable for this phenomenon. Brain drain poses a significant risk, as the departure of a substantial number of educated and skilled workers makes it difficult to predict a country's future. The UK may have claimed to "decolonize" its former colonies, but the effectiveness of this process depends on one's definition of decolonization. There is still much work to be done to enable these nations to stand independently as powerful and influential states. An international body should undertake efforts to help these countries find their voices and address structural inequalities on a global scale.

Now, it is important to consider the perspectives of the former colonies on this issue. Regrettably, although these nations might recognize the loss of skilled workforce and have opinions on the matter, it is presumably not a top priority on their political agenda to confront their former colonizers, who are currently powerful states. Thus, a recommendation of this paper would be to **organize yearly international conferences to discuss the progress and development of Less Developed Countries**, which the leaders of the UK should attend, alongside officials from the affected countries. During these conferences, the leaders could enter into negotiations, as equal partners, and decide on their country's futures together. I believe that the potential of such conferences is immense and the agenda of the conferences will allow the addressing of issues such as fair business trades and mutually beneficial economic deals. There should be a focus on condemning those that exploit the 'cheap' labor and natural resources. Thus, by providing the platform for leaders to sit down eye-to-eye, open, honest, and fruitful conversations can be expected and are hoped for.

Whilst this recommendation stands, to avoid confusion, it is important to acknowledge that no personal blame is put on the current leaders of the UK for the colonial history of the country. However, there must be some efforts to help the states disadvantaged by its former rule. . By creating conditions that make it challenging for skilled individuals to

work in and contribute to their home countries, and by engaging in deals that intentionally obstruct the development of former colonies, a brighter future becomes difficult to envision. However, if concerted efforts are made to address these issues, hope for progress and growth can be restored.

Finally, in actuality, implementing these conferences could serve as an initial solution of only putting the subject on the political agenda. Hopefully, the world might get a better understanding of the needs of these countries. However, at the end of the day, one cannot forget the fact that deciding to live and work elsewhere than our home country is also a free choice, and one must examine this perspective as well. Thus, these conferences could also be eye-opening for the UK, or other European countries regarding the phenomenon of brain drain.

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