**Positive and Negative Effects of the Columbian Exchange**

The Columbian Exchange refers to the significant transfer of food, ideas, crops, populations, and diseases between Afro-Eurasia (old world) and the Americas (new world) after Christopher Columbus's voyage in 1492 (Jordan, 2016). European exploration brought changes in farming and technical knowledge to the new world. The old world gained new food, cash crops, and metal supplies (Nunn & Qian, 2010). The new world also gained many old-world crops, including coffee and sugar, that were well-suited for their soils. However, despite these gains, the exchange had more negative impacts, especially on the new world. It led to slavery and significant deaths from wars and diseases (Horgan, 2022). Arguably, the Columbian Exchange had more negative than positive impacts on the new world and mainly positive implications on the old world.

**Positive Effects**

Christopher Columbus was historically perceived as a hero for generations due to his contribution to bringing civilization to the new world (Nunn & Qian, 2010). On the one hand, the European explorers brought Christianity and Western ideals to the new world. Introducing new ideals, religions, and races resulted in America's current diversity (Jordan, 2016). On the other hand, the introduction of tools and technological know-how aided the civilization of the new world. Before the arrival of Columbus, the natives did not have metal tools or horses. However, the initial occupants of the new world, i.e., the Aztecs, Maya, and the Inca, had extraordinary achievements without the help of iron tools, wheels, or horses and mules (Crosby, 1972). Nevertheless, the new ideas, knowledge, and tools brought to the new world by European explorers significantly improved agriculture and diversity.

The Columbus exchange also resulted in the introduction of old-world crops and foods

to the Americas and those from the Americas to the old world (McNeill, 2008). Crops from the new world, such as potatoes and corn, were brought back to Europe by the explorers. The new world gained crops such as barley, wheat, and rice from the exchange. This has vastly transformed the way Europeans and Americans ate. The food crops brought back to Europe were healthier due to their lower calorie intake (Nunn & Qian, 2010). Additionally, crops such as cacao, chili peppers, and tomatoes brought from the new world complemented the existing foods by improving taste and vitamin consumption. This has significantly improved the region's overall health. The new world also gained cash crops such as sugar cane and coffee, which were grown in the Americas and sold back in Europe, opening up the region to international trade. The Columbian Exchange, therefore, introduced new diets to the two regions, and the cash crops opened up the Americas to global trade.

**Negative Effects**

               A major negative impact of the Columbian Exchange was the significant deaths of

the natives (Nunn & Qian, 2010). After the invasion of the Europeans into the new world, close to 95 percent of the total population in the new world died mainly due to diseases such as chicken pox, smallpox, influenza, typhoid, cholera, scarlet fever, whooping cough, malaria, and bubonic plague brought from the old world. The natives were not naturally immune to these diseases and thus became sick, while the Europeans were less affected by the outbreaks. The natives' understanding of the diseases and containing outbreaks was minimal, resulting in their rapid spread. Syphilis was the only disease taken back to the old world that significantly impacted the region. Furthermore, the conquerors killed those that resisted their invasion (Horgan, 2022). They destroyed cities and cultural artifacts. They had sophisticated weapons, such as guns, that gave them an advantage over the natives. Besides, with the introduction of guns, the natives started fighting against each other, resulting in more deaths. These waves of epidemics and war led to the deaths of millions of Native Americans.

               The introduction of cash crops into the new world and the death of many natives due

to disease outbreaks and wars with the Europeans led to a significant need for labor resulting in the slave trade (Horgan, 2022). More than 12 million Africans were abducted and forcefully moved to the Americas (mainly to South America, Central America, and The Caribbeans) from the 1600s to the 1900s to work in large farms (Nunn & Qian, 2010). The Europeans also enslaved the native Americans, where a European was entitled to a particular number of native slaves. They were instructed in Spanish and had to adhere to the Catholic faith. They also had to provide gold and labor tributes, among other products. The impacts of this slavery, mainly racism, can still be seen in America, where even the natives that initially occupied the land are considered a minority group.

               In conclusion, Columbus' arrival in the Americas opened doors to the American

conquest by the Europeans. The explorers' arrival may have changed or slightly improved the American civilizations at the time, but they came at a substantial cost to the new world. The negative impact of the European conquest in the new world has been downplayed in history. Diversity, novel technologies, and new foods may have been positive features of the exchange. However, it also resulted in slavery and massive loss of lives, leading to a substantial transformation of the global ecosystem. Thus, the harmful effects of the Columbian exchange significantly outweigh the positives.

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