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Causes of Caribbean Piracy during 1500

**Introduction**

The great era of piracy that extended from 1500 to 1700 is also called the “Golden Age of Piracy”. It is named so, because in this era, the pirates were most successful and they had quite a good existence, both in terms of power as well as numbers. The piracy in the Caribbean is actually a product of the interplay of the national trends, where the central point was European Trade, as well as colonizers. The lands, near to the Caribbean are called Spanish Main and it was the heart of trade and civilization. In economic history, the Spanish were famous for mining as well as staggeringly large reservoirs of silver buttons from Peru as well as New Spain. Every now and then there are major trades comprising the Silver Train that was one of the most tempting gains for the pirates who used to attack the stragglers to get the silver buttons as well as to seize the main vessels. In addition, there were some other major centers of progression and wealth such as English, Dutch, and French traders who were also empowered in different dimensions of economic and political progression in strong competition with the Spanish. It is highlighted that Spain was also called, “No peace beyond the line”. So, the major source of attention was the economic progression of the Caribbean, where several questions need answers. One of the major questions is the prime causes of Caribbean Piracy, taking into account that it connects present to the past not only in the form of history but also in the form of social and political timelines.

**Discussion**

Caribbean piracy during 1500 is not just an era in the timeline, but it is a pictorial display of the history in the form of events that shaped the glamorous world of Europe. Piracy was not just a crime, but a source of earning, a sign of the inter-country disparities as well as a description of the manipulation that pirates faced in the form of dominant government and prevalent socio-economic structures. It is highlighted that there are different causes of piracy, such as social adherence, economic progression or political disparities. However, this paper aims at the three major causes of piracy, termed as Land-based governance, Maritime governance, and poverty.

The Caribbean colonies are actually the part of the large autonomous entities, that were ruled by different governors and noblemen who belonged to the European governments and the government institutions. With the end of the European Wars, there was a shift in the private laws that enforced a ban which resulted in a deployment of the naval ships to the Caribbean thus piracy became out of control. The reason is, European countries deployed the naval ships to the regions so as to maintain a control over the colonies that were increasing. The local governments were also able to control the pirate attacks where the government became complicated in their trade activities. With an increase in the number of pirates, there were about 2,400 pirates who were operating in the Caribbean, that not only threatened the ships but the colonies as well. In addition, the lack of coherent culture in colonies paved the way to facilitate piracy. In order to gain profit from the Bahamas, as well as, letters of marque were sole to the privateers. In addition, a major cause in terms of Caribbean’s piracy is associated with the conflict between the religion and the politics where the Protestants were tolerating as well as supporting piracies moving ahead to both, Colonies of the Catholics and the people who were shipping. In this stance, privateering became one of the major shields for the private activity that gave pirates the cloak of legality and legitimacy. Thus, when this cloak of legitimacy and legality was snatched with the naval enforcement of Europe that aimed at capturing pirates, the pirates started more piracies as compared to the past, out of aggression and with an aim to defend themselves.

Maritime governance is another reason that paved the way for the piracy in Caribbean, taking into account that in the past, there was a freedom of the seas. In order to control the freedom, law enforcement was introduced for the seas, taking into account the technological developments that declared that the oceans will be covered under the judication of the nation. It is highlighted that before the maritime governance, the parties were having the freedom to serve as per their will but with the passage of time, law enforcement agencies were promoted that narrowed the ways of life for pirates and they started major piracies. In addition, the major stake of piracy in the Caribbean was promoted by the initiatives of government sponsorship. Different governments used pirates as their weapons against the other states. In addition, pirates were assigned the task of harassing the Spanish vessel that was carrying gold to the Caribbean Sea. Thus, it is observed that there are two-fold features of emphasized piracies in the Caribbean, which was home to both, the internal as well as external conflicts.

Poverty and destruction are some of the major and solid reasons for piracy, taking into account that there was a social acceptance of piracy. Firstly, people adopted piracy as a way to find the economic issues they were facing and the restriction they were facing in the hands of colonization and war. It is also highlighted that in the fifteenth century, the approach to piracy was similar to that of theft in the present time, taking into account that pirates consider themselves as the lower-class people who were the product of social destruction. It is important to note that the ship was the major source of transport at the time and it was one of the reasons that the pirates were more famous for dealing in silver buttons which were carried through ships. In addition, burglary of major equipment was also significant because there was no apparent contract between the crew and the pirates. The acceptant of piracy was a major dimension in the areas that were having economic depression, taking into account that crimes brought an additional fund to the overall economy.

**Whydah Gally**

The Whydah Gally, that is also known as Whydah, was a fully rigged galley ship that went through different historical shifts over the passage of time. The major role of the ship can be analyzed in terms of The Golden Age of Piracy when it was for first captured by Captain Samuel “Black Sam” Bellamy. He was the one who sailed the ship up to the coast of colonial America that captured the ships that went nearby. In 1715, the Whydah was commissioned in London. It is also called the slave merchant of the present time. In the time of West African slave trading, the Kingdom of Whydah, the ship was loaded with considerable heavy weapons that made it a transport and trading ship. When the ship left Africa, it was loaded with 500 slaves that were carried to the Caribbean. In 1771, Whydah was caught in some kind of storm and the ship got wrecked. Only two of the crew members survived. In historical context, it is highlighted that “The Whydah” is more like a historical figure that communicates the original story behind the story of piracy. The ship was used to terrorize the merchant ships that were around and also to steal their haul. After being weighed down by the treasure that was loaded on the ship, the ship ran into a sandbar, away from the shores of the Cape Cod and then the ship was undiscovered for many years. Here, the ship was the emblem of piracy. In 1984, as a result of some sort of investigation, Whydah was considered as one of the most major and undiscovered ships that were to be found. Now, its been 34 years, that the marine archeologists are still striving hard to comb through the site. According to some of the archeologists, the overall history ensures that when the ship was unloaded, in fact, found sunken in the land making up $4 million in money. The money was that of past time, i.e. it is in the form of coins, that made up billions of dollars in the present time.

**Conclusion**

A critical insight into history highlights that Caribbean piracy is a two-fold event that embraced all the social, political and economic events. Piracy is more like a historical event that shows inter-country conflict, disparities in the political affairs and the gaps in accepting economic growth of Spain that used pirates for the achievement of personal goals, where the pirates only intended to look for the avenues of survival of their lives. Piracy is just another emblem of the leading factors that empowered that society. In the same way, one of the historical signs is present in the form of Whydah, which was a pirate ship. The ship covered the timeline from being a trading ship to that of a ship that was owned by pirates. Even today, all the treasures of the ship cannot be discovered but it is a major source of a flashback into history.