



Trajectories of European capitalism in Africa: Issues and prospects

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Abstract

The industrial revolution provides the strategic framework for the transformation of human society from an agrarian rural society to a liberal mode of production characterized by advanced industrial process, technology, urbanization and flow of capital across borders. Therefore, this study seeks to analyse the effects of British industrial revolution on modern African states, its economy and politics; taking into consideration the benefits and perceived contradictions in Africa. The outcome of the research reveals that although British industrial revolution advanced the course of imperialism, colonialism and exploitation of African resources, it also positively expanded the values of capitalism into African economy and created new states, political processes and culture in Africa. The human resources taken from Africa contributed to the development of capitalist industrial revolution in Europe, since African slaves provided the cheap labour and human strength that accelerated the revolutionary process. The multiplier effect of the revolution created an unequal trade relationship between Africa and European states, which in modern times has reduced Africa states to producers of raw materials and primary products for use by industries in Europe. This web of unequal trade relations has become one of the key variables that undermine Africa's development and economy.

Keywords: Britain, Africa, industrial revolution, capitalism, colonialism and development

Introduction

The industrial revolution began in Britain in the late 1700s, which marked a period in which predominantly agrarian rural societies in Europe and America became industrial and urban. It marks a major turning point in history from hand production methods to the use of machines. The development of machine tools gave rise to factory system and improved efficiency of water power, including the use of steam power in manufacturing processes. The development of machine tools as the most important technological innovation of industrial revolution was motivated by increased need for cotton processing to increase the value of output and capital in textiles production.

However, a number of factors contributed to the use of steam engine in textile production because the textile industry was the first to use modern production methods. This was influenced by the great deposits of coal and iron ore in Britain, which proved essential for industrialization. In addition, to this economic prowess, politically, Britain was the world's leading colonial power. Its colonies served as sources of raw materials as well as market place for manufactured goods from Britain, making her the world leading economic power (Harley, 2013:8).

As the demand for British goods increased, merchants needed more cost-effective method of production which led to the rise of imperialism coordinated by the imperial power. This aspect of tacit imperialism was first tested by Britain in the sugar colonies of West Indies. This colony in Northern America was created to provide slaves whose primary duty were to work in the plantations as a recipe for cheap labour. The northern colonies were settled by English emigrants whose objective was to establish independent settlement, to serve as a production hub of stable products that could be sold at profit in Europe (Harley,

2013:8).

To protect the gains of industrial revolution, Britain introduced mercantile protection policies in British Caribbean to prevent the sale of cheaper French sugar in British markets. In effect British consumers subsidized British slave plantations which led to the diversification of the British exports. Such diversification rested heavily on the Atlantic economy that depended on the slave based sugar colonies of the Caribbean resulting in economic growth and successes of Britain as a leading European economic actor. IN this regard, the British empire was unique and its development provided a growing diversified and relatively wealthy market for British manufactured goods that other empires lacked.

Hence, the gains of British Atlantic economy of the eighteenth-century enhanced manufacturing, urbanization and the mercantile class resulting in a boost in economic growth and expansion of trade. Such expansion in trade led to the sudden rise of mercantilism and colonial rivalry among European states. Such expansion created vested interests in Europe, with Portugal transferring its sugar cultivation from the Atlantic island to the New World. As Eric Williams pointed out, the incorporation of the Americas into the Eurasian economy was central to European political and economic dominance in world politics (Eric, 2012:18) [2].

However, the British domination of sugar refiners and suppliers of export goods began to decline in the early eighteenth century after the French gained control of Saint Dominique. BY the end of 1720s Britain's re-export trade in sugar had disappeared which led to rapidly growing decline of British market for sugar as well as a reduction in substantial re-export trade to the rest of Europe (Davis, 1962:294). As this development increases, Britain began

to lose its comparative advantage in sugar production to larger islands controlled by France leading to the dismantling of protective tariffs that kept British sugar prices substantially higher in European market.

Since Britain's economic dominance in sugar production lied in its capacity to exploit labour and capital, there is need to receive imperial support for capitalists. This support came in form of sourcing for cheap labour beyond the west indies. The search led to the methodical extention of imperialism to Africa. As Eric Schneider (2012)^[2] emphasized, the cheapest labour and capital supply came from African slave trade. Thus, the gains trans-Atlantic slave trade created the triangular trade network that increased the political rivalry among European powers over the control and exploitation of Africa's labour, resources and markets. African states were forced by the dynamics of these struggle to export and import solely from the home imperial power. The imperial power controlled the slave trade, the sale of the staple and monopolized profits from the sale of European goods in the colonies.

Therefore, in their quest to consolidate the imperial monopoly of Africa's slave trade, resources and market, colonialism was institutionalized in Africa in order to change the political and economic structures of Africa to benefit the interests of the imperial powers. To this end, the industrial revolution, which had created political and economic rivalry among European powers, led to the use of imperialism as instruments of foreign policy to exploit Africa and Africans. The African economy was significantly changed by the Atlantic slave trade through the process of imperialism and the economic policies that accompanied colonization (Settles, 1996:2)^[5]. So, the aim of colonialism which was a product of the multiplier effects of British industrial revolution to Africa, was aimed at the exploitation of the physical, human and economic resources of Africa to the benefit of the colonizing nations. For this reason, this study will critically analyse the comparative effects of British industrial revolution to African economy and politics, with the view of identifying its benefits and negative pay-offs towards the development of Africa.

British Industrial Revolution and the Relevance of African Slave Labour.

The industrial revolution triggered the search for cheap labour and markets for European goods. IN their quest to achieve economic growth and diversification, the Europeans stimulated the transatlantic slave trade as a radical strategy to tacitly destroy African economic structures with the intention to dominate its politics and economy to the benefit of the imperial powers. Therefore, the arrival of Europeans on the West African coast and their establishment of slave ports in various parts of the continent triggered a continuous process of exploitation of Africa's human resources, labour and commodities. This exploitative slave commerce influenced the African political and economic elites who collaborate with European slave merchants to export cheap labour to work in European factories and plantations. While the African collaborators made small gains from the transactions, the Europeans benefited greatly, since it allowed them access to amass the raw materials that fed the industrial revolution to the detriment of African societies whose capacity to transform their modes of production into viable entrepreneurial economy was severely halted.

Africa was impoverished by the imperialist posture of European industrial revolution. The human resources taken from Africa contributed to the development capitalist industrial revolution and wealth of Europe. This is because trade in human beings had already existed in Europe even before the industrial revolution. Some enslaved Africans had reached Europe and Middle East before the mid-15th century, as a result of a trade in human beings had long existed in Africa and Europe.

However, after the European discovery of the American continent, the demand for African labour grew tremendously, as other sources of labour from Europe and America were found to be insufficient and expensive, adding to high cost of production. This high demand for cheap labour from Africa triggered off the transatlantic slave trade. Atr the initial stage of the transatlantic slave trade, kidnapping was adopted by Portugal as a means of getting slaves from Africa, who were then sold to European capitalists (Hakim, 2012:6)^[3].

The Spanish slave merchants took the first African captives to the Americas from Europe as early as 1503 and by 1518 the first captives were shipped directly from Africa to the America. As the production capacity of European industries were expanding the demand for skilled African slaves increased. This led to the forced removal of over 25 million skilled labour from Africa. For this reason, from 1500 to 1900 the population of Africa remained stagnant and declined (Hakim, 2012:3-6)^[3]. This loss of population and potential labour force was the major factor leading to Africa's economic underdevelopment. As more Africans were forced to work in European industries, the industrial revolution gained more strength and expanded, while African industrial development was halted and decimated.

However, the loss of population and skilled labour brought about by the transatlantic trade, created the conditions for the subsequent colonial conquest of Africa by the European powers, primarily to sustain and consolidate the industrialization structures and mechanisms of the the industrial revolution. This unequal relationship still exist between Africa and the European powers today, because Africa beginning from the period of industrial revolution to the contemporary era, still serve as sources of cheap labour, raw materials as well as markets for manufactured goods from Europe.

The unequal relationship that was created by the transatlantic slave trade as a consequence of the industrial revolution was justified by the ideology of racism. This ideology shows that Africans were naturally inferior to Europeans, and this has permeated the mind of Africans who also see themselves as inferior. Such inferiority complex has clogged the creative minds of Africans from coming up with new inventions to re-industrialize Africa. Rather Africans continue to import luxury goods from Europe from the proceeds of cheap raw material exported to industries in Europe. Hence Africa continue to wallow in poverty, while Europe continue to improve on their industrial structures and production processes. This racist ideology was perpetuated by economic liberalism which is one of the most significant legacies of industrial revolution.

In addition the ideology of racism was strategically created by the capitalist to hid the contributions of Africans in the development of industrial revolution in Europe. Through the absence of written records, many European scholars argue that the industrial revolution was powered by Europeans and that Africans slaves were unskilled and never contributed to its development. Africa

was seen and classified as a dark continent and this image still exist in the minds of contemporary Europeans.

Contrary to this view Africa history reveals that the industrial revolution was stimulated by Europe but propelled by Africa and African resources, without which the gains and expansion of the industrial revolution would have halted and stagnated. This because Africa's economic and social development before 1500 was ahead of Europe. It was gold from the great empires of West Africa namely Ashanti, Mali and Songhai that provided the means of for the economic take-off of Europe in the 13th and 14th centuries and this aroused the interest of Europe in West Africa (Hakim, 2012:13-16)^[3].

In the 14th century, the West African empire of Mali was larger than Western Europe and reputed to be one of the richest and most powerful state in the world. This was demonstrated in 1324, when the emperor of Mali, Mensa Musa visited Cairo. He took so much gold that the price of gold in world market fell dramatically and did not recover its value even 12 years later. It was because of this reason, that Europeans ventured to capture the millions of Africa to work in Europe as well as to use the resources of Africa to kick-start the industrial process and revolution in Europe (UNESCO Report, 1999)^[9].

However, by the mid of 17th century the European demand for African slaves, particularly for the sugar plantations in the Americas became so great that they could only be acquired through raid and warfare. This implies that while Africa was busy developing its production technology in extractive industries, Europe concentrated in in developing machine powered guns. This led to arms race in Africa. Some societies preyed on others to obtain slaves in exchange for European firearms, in the belief that if they did not acquire firearms to protect themselves, they would be attacked and captured by their rivals and enemies who did possess such weapons. This arms race resulted in high demand for European firearms which in turn contributed to the industrial development of Europe (Parker and Rathbone, 2007: 32)^[4].

However, through the strategic use of firearms, Africans were captured and transported to the Americas where they were put to work in mines and plantations. Their sweat and blood served as a bedstone to the tremendous wealth that stimulated industrial development and revolution in America and Europe. The discovery of the New World boosted the European economy and marked the starting point of Africa's economic woes and underdevelopment as well as the consolidation of European industrial capacity and structures.

The exploitation of the new land required millions of skilled labours capable of standing the tropical climate which encompasses the vast region from the US South down to Brazil. The enslavement of Indians proved inefficient because the native population was hard to control and were affected by the diseases brought from the Old World. Therefore, the solution to this problem was the forced transportation of Africans and the strengthening of the transatlantic slave trade. The majority of African slaves were shipped to Brazil, Caribbean and Spain. According to Hugh Thomas, around 13 million Africans were shipped, among whom 11 million arrived alive in the Americas. Approximately 15.4% of slaves were exported from Bight of Biafra, 29% from Central Africa, 7.7% from South East (Mozambique and Madagascar). Similarly, the principal carriers of slaves from Africa were Portugal and Brazil that shipped

42.3% of African slaves, followed by Britain with 23.6%, France shipped 11.4%, Dutch 4.5%, Spain 14.5%. This shows that the Europeans needed African slaves to work in their mines and plantations which provided the bedrock for European industrialization. This is represented by the table below:

Table 1: Key European states in Atlantic Slave Trade.

Country	Voyages	Slaves Transported	% Slaves Transported
Portugal (including Brazil)	30,000	4,650,000	42.3
Spain (including Cuba)	4,000	1,600,000	14.5
France (including West Indies)	4200	1,250,000	11.4
Holland	2000	500,000	4.5
Britain	12000	2,600,000	23.6
British North America	1500	300,000	2.7
Denmark	250	50,000	0.5
Other	250	50,000	0.5
Total	54200	11,000,000	100.0

Source: Thomas 1997, Table I, p. 804.

From the table above, it vividly reveals that the key actors of industrial revolution in Europe were involved in slave trade. The underlying economic aim of slave trade was to massively acquire cheap labour and through the web of exploitation extract surplus values to geometrically increase profit maximization. Through increased quest for profit maximization, European states made about 54200 voyages to Africa and forcefully removed over 11,000,000 skilled workers, engineers, philosophers, miners and scientists to boost the industrial base of European economy. This played a great role in the industrial revolution that moved Europe from a feudal economic model to an industrial society, while at the same time stagnated Africa's economic development. As Europe become industrialized, Africa became de-industrialized. To this effect, Africa played a dual role to promote industrial revolution in Europe and this role was simple. At first, Africa provided market for buying of cheap skill labour by European slave merchants to work in industries. The products produced in these European industries were exported to Africa at approximately high price. The Africa slave owned nothing even their labour and were also payed little or no wages for their labour. Therefore, the surplus values became enormous leading to a wide pool of capital, which was re-invested in Europe. Such investment brought about unprecedented expansion of European industrial structures, processes and power.

Therefore, according to Thomas (1997) such unprecedented expansion in European influence and control in North and Sub-Saharan Africa was made possible by the decline of Ottoman power in Africa. This made it easy for Europe to connect directly to Africa and with direct access to gold reserves which was hitherto handled by the Arabo-Berbers through the Trans-Saharan trade. Also, this gave Europe the power to control gold supplies from Sub-Saharan Africa and a covert influence over world currency regime and policy. With such tacit control of world currency system, funds were not only made available for consolidation of the gains of industrial revolution but also added a great boost to further industrialization of Europe.

However, due to perceived economic growth in Portugal, Britain and France, other state actors were attracted to Africa and struggle for African labour and resources began. Germany, Spain and other European nations joined the race for the complete

encirclement of Africa, which led to its effective colonization. Colonization of Africa provided mechanism for enslavement of Africans and its resources.

Industrial Revolution, Colonialism and the Containment of its Benefits in Africa.

The benefits of industrial revolution, according to Karl Marx can only be transmitted through the modernization frameworks of colonialism (Schraeder, 2004: 328-330)^[7]. This is because Marx classified Africa as one of the Asiatic (non-Western) societies that its economy and political system reflects the vices of backwardness, stagnation, despotism and barbarism (Shlomo 1968: 11-15)^[8]. Based on this assumption, Africa unlike Europe lacked the ability to move its economy and politics through a process of revolutionary development on the part to socialism. For this reason, Marx concluded that the spread of colonialism to Africa was a brutal but necessary tool for the transformation of African societies from an agriculturally based rural society into industrially based urban societies.

However, such transformation which was the hallmark of industrial revolution would be accompanied by introduction of free market capitalism into Africa through the structural mechanism of colonialism. From Marx's conceptual analysis, colonialism at its incipient stage may look brutal because its barbaric methods to defeat people unwilling to submit themselves to foreign rule. Similarly, in the long run the benefits of industrial revolution would be revealed in sense that colonial rule would facilitate the introduction of capitalism and transplant of modern capitalist type of industry such as factories and transportation networks to Africa.

Therefore, Marx's assumption of relocating modern capitalist factories and transportation network to Africa through colonialism was potentially realized by providing a spark that ignited the modernization process in Africa. This led to construction of British and French designed railroads in Sub-Saharan Africa which served as one of the critical benefit of development and the extension of values of industrial revolution to African societies. The railway system became the forerunner of modern industry and economic development in Africa. With increased economic activities in the colonies, banking, stock exchange and other financial institutions and facilities were established to complement the gains of industrial revolution towards Africa through the development initiatives of colonial capitalist strategists.

These developmental initiatives of colonialism and the implementation of capitalism, according to Marx would provide the necessary stage in the advancement toward socialist revolution in Africa. For this reason, Marx argues that the terrible costs associated with the spread of capitalism under the guise of colonialism is worth paying for if the result was the creation of socialist societies in Africa. But Marx's theoretical prediction that the institutionization of capitalism through colonialism would provide the catalyst for creation of socialism in Africa was unrealistic and a mirage that creates endless hopes of technology transfer and modernization. The costs of colonialism and capitalism out ways the expected benefits. Thus, the extension of capitalist ideology of industrial revolution has created more costs or inhibitions to Africa's quest to viable economic recovery and growth.

Therefore, the strategies used by European capitalists to undermine the benefits of industrial revolution, Africa's development initiatives and contain the spread of Marx's socialist revolution in Africa is known as Collective Imperialism. So, collective imperialism from the conceptual perspectives of Kwame Nkrumah is the replacement of national imperialism which compelled Africa nations to owe exclusive allegiance to a single metropolitan country with a group of imperialists who uses multi-lateral institutions as a platform to control the economy of peripheral states (Mutiso and Rohio, 2007:432-433)^[11].

The root of this process of collective imperialism may be traced back to the period of the Second World War, when the socialist bloc was too small and weak to give decisive assistance to the European working class movement and to the mass movements in Africa like the Rassemblement Democratique Africain (RDA) and the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) in Sub-Saharan Africa. These movements threatened the hegemonic influence and existence of capitalism not only in Europe but also in Africa. Therefore, to protect itself from disintegration and collapse, capitalism had to launch a series of reforms not only to build a protective armour around the inner workings of its system but also to decimate any form of collaboration between the European working class and Africa workers' union (Nkrumah 1968:1-23)^[6]. The strategic aim of such decimation of relationships bet European and African working class was to ensure that Marx's prediction that colonialism and capitalism would provide the leverage for socialist revolution in Africa.

Therefore, to nip such revolutionary forces and avoid internal breakdown of the capitalist system, the governments of capitalist countries in Europe granted their workers certain concessions which did not the basic nature of the capitalist system of exploitation. They brought in some elements of socialist values into capitalist practice and procedures. They gave the working class in Europe social security, higher wages, better working conditions, professional training facilities and other improvements.

These reforms according Nkrumah (1968:15)^[6] helped to blur fundamental contradictions and to remove some of the glaring injustices while at the same time ensuring the continued exploitation of the workers. The essence of these social improvement was to create a myth around the workings and practice of capitalism. That it provides the society with economic affluence, abundance and a better life for all. Therefore, the capitalists established a welfare state in Europe as the safeguard against the threat of communism and fascism.

However, the problem was to find ways of funding the welfare state while at the same time avoid sacrificing the important principle of profit maximization. To this effect, the capitalists embarked on external reforms designed to raise extra money needed for the maintenance of the new welfare state at home. Therefore, the capitalists had to depend more heavily on the exploitation of material and human resources of the colonial territories in Africa. Hence, colonialism became more brutal by stagnating the transformation of African economy from agriculturally based society into an industrially based economy by ensuring that despots and stooges rule African states. This was reinforced by the introduction of barbaric methods to make Africans submit themselves to exploitation of capitalism, thereby negated Marx's principle that colonialism will facilitate the

preliminary stage to socialism. This idea was grossly defeated because the spread of capitalism under the guise of colonialism has created more costs than benefits in Africa. So the gains of industrial revolution was turned into exploitation in Africa, hence Africa became a dumping ground for European goods and services.

To ensure that Africa do not benefit from the technological innovations and gains of European industrial revolution, certain strategies were introduced and institutionalized. The first of this strategy was the use of multilateral aid to tacitly influence and control the economy of African states toward a specific outcome that promotes the interest of international finance capital institutions at the detriment of development incentives in Africa. Through international organizations like International Monetary Fund, World Bank, International Finance Corporation etc the European powers have unguided access to African economy.

This is done by forcing African borrowers to submit to various exploitative conditions, such as supplying information about their economy. They are also required to submit their economic policies and development plan to review by World Bank or IMF, thereby accepting the supervision of loans and grants by these agencies who determine how these loans should be used and on what policy item. Often such loans according to Nkrumah (1968)^[6] were never used to promote and sustain rapid industrialization in Africa, hence technology transfer, innovation and capacity were stagnated, making Africa to remain underdeveloped.

Similarly, conditions which hedge around the loans swiftly move African states into the web of development crisis, poverty, low industrialization and economic recession. These conditions apply to industry, commerce, agriculture, shipping, insurance and other political and military variables. The conditions include agreement for economic cooperation, the right to meddle in internal finances like currency and foreign exchange mechanism, to lower trade barrier in favour of donor countries' goods and capital, to protect the interest of foreign investors, forcing the recipient states to set up counterpart funds, to supply raw material to donor countries at cheap rates and buy goods and services from donor countries using the funds. All conditions contract the economy of African states and reduce their capacity to develop and industrialize, thus limiting the gains of Europe industrial revolution to reach Africa (Nkrumah, 1968:14-16)^[6].

Another strategic tool used to undermine the extension of values of industrial revolution to Africa is propaganda and psychological warfare. The aim is to prevent Africa from industrializing by creating in their mind the consciousness that for Africa to develop they must follow the European model of industrialization, urbanization and economic model. This divisive consciousness is to demoralize the quest to follow a non-Western path to development. To this end, Africa began an endless chase for technology transfer and Foreign Direct Investment, dis-regarding the development of indigenous technology, science and research. The psychological attacks are made through the agency of broadcasting stations like British Broadcasting Corporation, Voice of Germany, CNN and other aspects of social media. The war of words is supplemented by written propaganda using wide range of political devices, scientific publications, reports of

international finance institutions and socio-cultural literature. The paper war penetrates into every town and village discouraging Africans from carrying independent scientific research and development innovations and at the same time persuading them to look up to Europe to initiate development programmes and models. Through this strategy Africans are made to believe that any product manufactured in Africa is inferior while those from Europe is of the high standard and best. This impression is registered in their mind as stereotype and they believe it religious, thereby weakening their capacity to carry out innovative development values.

Through this strategy of propaganda, Nigeria abandoned its steel industry in Ajaokuta, thereby destroying at its source her capacity to industrialize. Nigerian government was also convinced through IMF and World Bank to sell off all public enterprises to private individuals, since government in Africa are corrupt and lack the will and probity to manage businesses. This to popularization of the slogan, government has no business in business. The acceptance of this idea has brought about the absence of policies to industrialize and the weakening of Nigeria economic base. Hence Nigeria imports virtually everything from food, fuel to industrial materials, as most of the industries have collapsed without any hope for future industrialization. In this way, African industries were destroyed and the entire economic and political systems taken over by Europe through international finance institutions without a single marine in sight.

Therefore, psychological war has become effective in Africa because Africans are fully convinced that they cannot govern themselves and unworthy to manage the abundant human and raw material resources in the continent. For this reason, Africa and Africans require foreign tutelage and control as a remedy for transition from a corrupt and poorly managed economy to an industrialize and efficient economic system. It is through this tutelage that they can benefit from the European values of industrial revolution.

Conclusion

The research critically examined the relevance of British industrial revolution to Africa by giving a cursory look at the impact of Africa slaves towards the acceleration of the revolutionary process as well as the benefits and contradiction of colonialism in Africa. To this effect, the arrival of African slaves into Europe provided the human resource catalyst that drove the success of the industrial revolution in Britain which resulted to the establishment of slave ports in West Africa Coast to ensure the availability of slave labour in European factories. Therefore, the demand for slave grew tremendously as industries in Europe demand for cheap labour in order to increase productivity and surplus value needed to sustain the revolutionary process. Despite the contributions of Africans towards the development of European capital and economy, the modern African states have been strategically alienated from the benefits of global capitalism, hence Africa wallows in web of development crisis. Britain need to redefine its relations with Africa by creating a partnership that will ensure shared commitments and mutual benefits.

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