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FROM CO-OPERATION TO CONQUEST: THE TRANSFORMATION OF AFRICANS – EUROPEANS RELATIONS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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Abstract
This paper examines the transformation of Euro-African relations from the fifteenth century to the nineteenth century, focusing on the shift from co-operation to conquest. Early interactions between Europeans and Africans were largely characterized by diplomacy, commerce, negotiated engagement, and mutual economic benefit under African political authority. However, the expansion of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade significantly changed the dynamics of Euro-African relations. The demand for enslaved labor in America reshaped African economies, intensified warfare in certain regions, and increased European commercial influence. The nineteenth-century introduction of legitimate commerce, driven by industrial demands, further integrated African economies into the global capitalist structure while deepening dependency. The rivalries among European powers culminated in the Scramble for Africa, which was formalized at the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885. Thus, this article examines the transformation of Euro-African relations from early cooperation to imperial domination. Drawing on historiographical debates and world-systems theory, it argues that the shift from mutual trade to colonial conquest was driven by structural changes in the global capitalist economy and intensifying European imperial competition. The study further highlights the enduring implications of these historical processes for Africa's post-colonial development and international relations.

Keywords: Euro-African relations, Atlantic slave trade, legitimate commerce, Imperialism, colonialism, African economic history

Introduction

Africa before European contact was a continent of dynamic civilizations, diverse cultures, and well-structured political systems. Contrary to colonial portrayals of Africa as a "dark continent", pre-colonial Africa was home to a range of advanced societies, such as the Mali Empire, Songhai Empire, Kingdom of Kongo, Benin Kingdom, Oyo Empire, and the Great Zimbabwe, among many others. These societies exhibited organized political structures, thriving economies, vibrant artistic traditions, and robust trade networks that extended across the Sahara and along the East African coast. Social and political practices varied widely, from centralized kingdoms and empires with powerful monarchs and military institutions, to decentralized societies governed through Councils of Elders and kinship-based systems. Intergroup relations among African societies were shaped by trade, diplomacy, migration, marriage, religion, festivals, and occasionally war. Though conflicts did occur, they were often regulated by customary norms, with many African societies having traditional mechanisms for peace-making and conflict resolution.

Moreover, religion constituted a central element in the socio-political organization of African societies. Before European contact, indigenous belief systems coexisted with external influences such as Islam, which entered the continent through trans-Saharan trade networks and interactions with Berbers, thereby reshaping political authority, commerce, and cultural life in many regions. The introduction of Islam contributed immensely to literacy, education, and governance in many parts of West and East Africa. Pre-colonial Africa was diverse and dynamic, with its own internal systems of development, competition, and cooperation. Thus, understanding this pre-European-African reality is essential to appreciating the roots of many conflicts and transformations that later unfolded during and after the colonial encounter.

However, the availability of immense natural and mineral resources in Africa, which has been of considerable benefit to the people, has attracted other states and individuals to the region. Indeed, from about the 15th century, the continent had witnessed the arrival of foreigners, particularly from Europe, with the intention of trading with the indigenous peoples of Africa, among other reasons. The early trade between Europeans and Africans revolved around items such as gold and leatherwork, and later shifted to the slave trade. When Europeans first arrived on the Atlantic coast during the fifteenth century, they encountered established states and trading systems that had long been integrated into trans-Saharan and Mediterranean networks. African rulers exercised authority over trade and dominated the economy, collecting tribute from vassal states to develop their kingdoms. The European merchants were expected to relate to and access the local markets through middlemen. Such exchanges occurred among Portugal, the Kingdom of Kongo, and the Kingdom of Benin, involving diplomatic correspondence, religious missions, and commercial partnerships.

The pattern of Euro-African relations began to change with the introduction and expansion of the Atlantic slave trade. The demand for human labor in the Caribbean Islands by Europeans created new economic opportunities that reshaped trade networks and political trends across many

African societies. By the nineteenth century, the relationship between Africans and Europeans had changed due to the dwindling demand for slaves, which spurred renewed interest in agricultural products spurred by the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution shifted the economic relationship toward an increase in demand for cash crops such as palm oil, palm kernel, cotton, Timber, groundnuts, rubber, and cocoa, among others, to feed the growing industries in Europe known as legitimate commerce. This rapid demand for raw materials encouraged European powers to expand their commercial influence in Africa.

This increase in demand for agricultural raw materials culminated in the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, held in Germany, whose outcome included the decision that European powers had to effectively occupy any territory in Africa where they had a presence. This idea of "Effective Occupation" led to the formal acquisition of territories in Africa, otherwise known as the colonization of Africa. As the name connotes, colonialism in Africa meant the external domination of the continent by European powers, changing the relationship status among the French, Belgians, Germans, Portuguese, and British. It should be emphasized that the domination of Africa during this period had distinct features and dynamics that have continued to affect the history and course of Africa's development even in contemporary times.

Thus, this study examines the transformation of Euro-African relations from the fifteenth century to the late nineteenth century. It argues that the shift from cooperation to conquest was shaped by changing economic structures, European industrial expansion, and intensifying imperial rivalries. Moreover, the change in the relationship between Africans and Europeans led to colonialism, and the effects have continued to plague the continent even after many African countries gained formal independence.

Historical Debate

Euro-African historians, over time, depicted Africa as an isolated and politically fragmented continent before the emergence of Europeans. These interpretations reduced the African level of development and portrayed the continent as backward until the civilizing missions of the Europeans. However, in the mid-twentieth century, some historians challenged the narrative, emphasizing developments in African societies before European arrival. One such development was the involvement and active participation of African societies in global trade. J. D. Fage argues that African states maintained political dominance over coastal trade during the early phases of

European contact.[1] He agreed with other scholars that early European merchants relied on African rulers and chiefs as intermediaries to access markets and resources.[2] Basil Davidson emphasized the political agency of African societies. He rejected the notion that European domination was inevitable, arguing that early Euro-African relations were largely cooperative, based on mutually beneficial trade arrangements.[3]

This relationship between Africa and Europeans changed in the 18th and 19th centuries with the introduction of the slave trade and later, legitimate trade. A more critical interpretation emerged with Walter Rodney, whose influential study examined European economic activities and highlighted the role of the slave trade and colonialism in Africa's underdevelopment.[4] Rodney contended that the exploitation of African labor and resources systematically extracted from Africa enriches European economies at the expense of the continent and undermines African development. Other economic historians, such as A. G. Hopkins, have examined the transition from the slave trade to legitimate commerce and its implications for African economies.[5] He argues that nineteenth-century trade in palm oil and other commodities created new forms of economic dependency that facilitated European political intervention.

Despite these differing perspectives, historians generally agree that the transformation of Euro-African relations, which began with mutual respect and benefits, was not the result of a single factor but rather a combination of economic, African political, and technological changes. African political authorities played active roles in shaping trade relationships, and the Atlantic world was a product of interactions between African and European societies.

Theoretical Framework

This paper employed world-systems theory, developed by Immanuel Wallerstein in the early 1970s, as the analytical framework. According to this theory, the global economy operates as an interconnected system composed of core, dependent, and peripheral regions, in which wealth and power are unevenly distributed.[6] European states, due to economic advancement, became the

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[1] J. D. Fage, A History of Africa (London: Routledge, 1978), 146–50.
[2] John Thornton, Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 44–71.
[3] Basil Davidson, The African Slave Trade: Precolonial History, 1450–1850 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961), 56.
[4] Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, 1973), 15–28.
[5] A. G. Hopkins, An Economic History of West Africa (London: Longman, 1973).
[6] Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World-System, vol. 1 (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

dominant powers during the early modern period and expanded their trade networks into dependent regions, such as Africa, which provided sources of raw materials, labor, and markets for finished goods. Africa was integrated into the international global trade with the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. For more than 300 years, enslaved Africans were exported to Europe to work on plantation farms in the Americas, generating enormous profits that contributed to European economic expansion.

The abolition of the slave trade through the Emancipation Act of 1833 shifted focus to legitimate commerce in the nineteenth century, further integrating Africa into the global economy as a supplier of raw materials for manufacturing industries. The industrial expansion paved the way for competition over resources and markets for finished goods, culminating in the colonization of Africa. World-systems theory, therefore, reinforces the notion that economic transformations within global systems contributed to the shift from cordial trade relationships to colonial domination.

Early Euro-African Relations

The appearance of Europeans in the African scene from the Fifteenth century was motivated by a combination of economic, religious, political, and technological factors. Importantly, among these was the European intention to gain direct access to African wealth, such as gold, ivory, and spices, rather than relying on trans-Saharan routes controlled by North African and Arab intermediaries. The disorganization of Mediterranean trade also intensified the search for an alternative route amid the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. Coupled with the above was the desire to spread Christianity to counter the influence of Islam. Geographical exploration became possible with advances in navigation and shipbuilding, which made long-distance sea voyages increasingly feasible, enhancing their political prestige and economic power through overseas expansion.[7] This established a long-lasting relationship between Africans and Europeans spanning over 400 years.

Meanwhile, the earliest phase of Euro-African relations was characterized by mutual relations, primarily for economic reasons, which were the main drivers of European contact with Africa. This suggested that the early interactions between the duos were shaped more by negotiation and cordial economic interest than by coercion. It was a relationship based on commercial exchange, as European traders sought gold, ivory, and other commodities available in

[7] A. Adu Boahen, African Perspectives on Colonialism (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 14–18.

large quantities in Africa in exchange for imported textiles, metal goods, and firearms. The trade routes were controlled by African rulers, who maintained authority over foreign merchants operating within their territories. European traders were typically confined to coastal trading posts and relied on African intermediaries to conduct commerce. Moreover, the co-operative nature of the early relations between Africans and Europeans was further demonstrated through diplomatic exchanges, with Africans travelling abroad as ambassadors. At the same time, European missionaries established religious missions in parts of Africa.

One example of the mutual relationship between Europeans and Africans was the establishment of diplomatic relations between King Nzinga Nkwuwu, the ruler of the Kingdom of Kongo, and King John II of Portugal in the late fifteenth century. The relationship between them led to the exchange of ambassadors, letters, and gifts, and to the conversion of King Nzinga Nkwukwu to Christianity, thereby promoting both economic and political alliances between the two.[8] At the same time, Oba Esigie, who ruled the Benin Kingdom in the early sixteenth century, maintained cordial diplomatic and commercial relations with the Portuguese, whose envoy he received at his court. He also regulated trade in pepper and ivory with other goods under his control and supervision. The control of trade was under him, showing a mutually biennial and controlled partnership.[9]

The Change: Slave Trade, Legitimate Commerce, and Expansion of European Influence

The relationship between Europeans and Africans was initially on equal footing, and mutual understanding was altered following the expansion of the Atlantic slave trade in the 16th century. Christopher Columbus's voyage in 1492 opened up the Americas to Europeans engaged in Plantation economies, with the natives working as labourers. However, the decline in the engagement of indigenous people led to the rise in the demand for African labour in plantation economies, which resulted in the forced migration of millions of Africans to America. In Africa, the slave trade contributed immensely to increased warfare and rivalries, political instability, and the decline of great empires, as rulers sought to capture prisoners for sale to European traders. European merchants established fortified trading posts along the coast, and commercial networks

[8] Thornton, Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 46–52.
[9] A. F. C. Ryder, Benin and the Europeans, 1485–1897 (London: Longman, 1969), 31–45.

expanded significantly during this period. Although African intermediaries remained important participants in the trade, the Europeans became more actively involved. Thus, by the 18th century, the slave trade had increased tremendously, involving major European powers such as Britain, France, and the Netherlands.[10]

The slave trade thrived in Africa for over three hundred years, with its far-reaching effects heavily on the African people, creating opportunities for Europeans to continue to dominate trade relations. Despite the long years of operation, the trade was abolished during the nineteenth century, leading to the emergence of legitimate commerce. European merchants changed their trading patterns to focus on agricultural products (palm oil, cocoa, rubber, coolants, and groundnuts), which were important for the growth of European manufacturing industries following the Industrial Revolution. The operations of legitimate trade increased European trading companies' incursions into the African interior, enabling them to secure adequate, stable, and reliable supplies of cash crops. Furthermore, the activities of missionaries and explorers contributed to the expansion of European influence by establishing religious missions and documenting the continent's geography. Although their aim was humanitarian, they still got involved with commerce and politics. They hoped that by evangelizing the African people, they would eradicate the slave trade and create social conditions favorable to the promotion of European commercial and colonial interests.[11]

The Scramble for Africa and Its Consequences on Africa.

By the late nineteenth century, the need for uninterrupted access to African agricultural products and territories had stirred fierce competition among European powers (Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, and Germany). Industrialization increased the demand for raw materials, while strategic considerations encouraged European states to establish territorial control over key regions, a period known as the "European Scramble for Africa". Meanwhile, to prevent Europeans from going to war against one another, the Berlin Conference was convened in Germany in November 1884 – February 1885 to discuss and regulate this competition. The conference laid down regulations for territorial acquisition. It introduced the principle of effective occupation,

[10] Paul E. Lovejoy, Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 75–85.
[11] K. B. C. Onwubiko, History of West Africa: School Certificate, A.D. 1000–1800, 2nd ed. (Onitsha: Africana Publishers Limited, 1982), 289.

which eventually led to the partition of Africa among the European powers, except for Ethiopia and Liberia.

The development led to the establishment of colonial rule in Africa and its consequences on African societies. Colonial administrations imposed new political systems against the established order, new economic policies, and the integration of African territories into global economies as suppliers of raw materials. African societies developed various forms of resistance and adaptation that eventually contributed to the emergence of nationalist movements in the twentieth century.

Colonialism in Africa

Colonialism, among other things, marked a significant turning point in the history of Africa. In the words of Adu Boahen:

> Never in the history of Africa did so many changes occur and with such speed as they did between 1880 and 1935. Indeed, the most fundamental and dramatic - though tragic –Many of these changes took place in the much shorter period from 1890 to 1910, the period that saw the conquest and occupation of virtually the whole continent of Africa by the imperial powers and the establishment of the colonial system.[13]

The colonial conquest of Africa necessarily led to the emergence of colonial territories across various regions. Areas such as Nigeria and the Gold Coast (now Ghana) had come under the British. In contrast, areas such as Senegal, the Ivory Coast, and even Algeria came under French rule, while Mozambique and Angola came under Portuguese rule. It should be pointed out that while this list is not exhaustive in terms of the areas occupied by European powers, what this, however, reveals is that the entire continent, after the Berlin conference, had been partitioned and divided among the powers and was readily occupied either through force or other subtle means throughout the period.

This seismic shift in the global political landscape, with Africa gaining geopolitical significance, was to plague Africa in the coming years. Partitioned Africa meant the continent was divided arbitrarily without the consent of Africans. In reality, this division led to ethnically fissured societies that have continued to promote centrifugal forces to the present day.

The Nature of the Colonial Rule

The economic exigencies in Europe, which culminated in the industrial revolution, directly led to the drive for and acquisition of territories in Africa. Essentially, the purpose of colonialism was not necessarily to serve the interests of the indigenous populace, as propagated by Europeans at the time, who claimed they were on a civilizing mission in Africa. Colonialism, properly so defined in Africa, was an exploitative instrument that relegated the African continent into an economic appendage of the metropolitan countries at the time. In fact, the colonies provided only raw materials and markets to serve the interests of European industries.[12] At the same time, colonial practices differed from region to region, as observable in the case of Portuguese Africa, which, due to economic restraints, chose large corporations (the Mozambique Company, the Niassa Company, and the Zambezi Company) to handle its territories, and the case of British West Africa, which largely employed the Indirect Rule system in the control of its West African colonies. The motive of colonialism in Africa was primarily economic.[13]

Trade was crucial in this new economic relationship between Europe and Africa. As Claude Ake pointed out, "trade between the colony and the colonizing power was a critical mechanism for the integration of African economies into the European capitalist system."[14] Indeed, the significance of trade is easy to understand given the large interest of Europeans in primary produce. The indigenous economy was geared towards serving this need. States such as Nigeria, the Gold Coast (Ghana), and Senegal were geared toward the production of groundnuts, cotton, cocoa, and oil palm. Interestingly, this new economic relationship was largely unequal given that aside from the exploitation of Labor in terms of low wages for mineworkers, African farmers prices for these commodities were largely decided by multinational monopolies such as the United African Company, Societe Commercial ouest Africaine (SCOA), and shipping companies such as Elder Dempster which ensured that Africans got the bad end of the deal in terms of trade. Trade was further characterized by imports of processed goods from Europe into the colonies, which largely facilitated a consumerist attitude in African colonies and killed surviving industries during the colonial period.[15]

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[12] A. Adu Boahen, "Africa and the Colonial Challenge," in General History of Africa, vol. VII: Africa under Colonial Domination, 1880–1935, ed. A. Adu Boahen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 1.
[13] . Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.
[14] Claude Ake, A Political Economy of Africa (Ibadan: Longman, 1981), 35.
[15] Ake, A Political Economy of Africa.

The vagaries of colonialism in Africa also ensured that colonial powers made a concerted effort to repress local industries and craftsmanship, in a bid to prevent industrialization in Africa, which is an index of economic development. In fact, commenting on the repercussions of this policy on colonial Africa, Walter Rodney states, "By the time that political independence was achieved, surviving craftsmanship had been turned towards attracting tourists rather than meeting the real needs of African people."[16] Similarly, the over-dependence on primary production in the colonies ensured that the African colonies were inextricably tied to the economies of the metropolis, fostering what has been described as disarticulation in the African colonies, whereby there was no internal integration in African economies.

To emphasize the vertical relationship between Africa and Europe, infrastructure such as roads, medical facilities, and transport was largely built to facilitate the colonial economy. It is no wonder that such statements as the one made by Lord Lugard, that the material development of Africa can be summed up in one word, Transport, gained significance.

Coupled with this was the fact that colonialism introduced a monetary system that largely favored the interests of European powers. According to Ake, the colony's monetary system was invariably an extension of the metropolis's. For instance, while the colonial banks such as Bank of British West Africa, *Banque de L'Afrique Occidentale* (BAO), *Banco di Roma* (Libya), and the Standard Bank in Southern Africa mobilized capital from African savings and loaned it to European business men on very low interest rates on the other hand African were discriminated in this system and were either not offered loans or were given these loans on very high interest rates.[17]

What this meant, essentially, was that there was low capital accumulation before Africa's independence, and this, in turn, has affected the course of development on the continent even in contemporary times. Equally important is the fact that colonial education failed to generate skilled manpower, so much so that Walter Rodney observes that "the main purpose of the colonial school system was to train Africans to help man the local administration at the lowest ranks and to staff the private capitalist firms owned by Europeans". This disregard for developing education to be relevant to society also affected Post-Independent African states. While this is not an exhaustive account of the nature of Africa's colonial history and experience, it does go a long way toward

[16] Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, 280.
[17] Ake, A Political Economy of Africa, 45–85.

revealing the vagaries of this system that ensured the continent remained subservient to the interests of European powers during this period.

Post Independent Africa

Before one proceeds further, it is necessary to rationalize Post-Independence Africa vis-à-vis Africa's international relations. On the one hand, independence, read at one level, was the transfer of power from the colonial government to the indigenous elites. Indeed, this nationalist petite-bourgeoisie, created by the colonial system due to the exploitative character and discrimination of the colonial regime, saw political power as a means to an end: political power was essential for restructuring the colonial economy for the benefit of the African state. Such statements by Kwame Nkrumah, a nationalist, that Africans should 'seek ye the political kingdom and all other things would follow' became the ideological mantra of the anti-colonial agitations that invariably led to independence. However, this view was much in contradiction with the existing reality of the post-colonial state. Indeed, African states were soon to realize that their colonial antecedents had brought numerous problems that affected every facet of their existence. It is not surprising, therefore, that Franz Fanon in his Wretched of the Earth explicitly states that "the apotheosis of independence transformed into the curse of independence."[18] On this note, this paper proceeds to assess clearly the implications of Africa's colonial history on its international relations.

Economic Disarticulation, Development, and Its Effect on Africa's International Relations

It should be recalled, as pointed out earlier, that the colonial economy encouraged a meagre developmental process in its colonies, and, as such, African economies were tied or largely incorporated into the economy of their colonial overlord. The vertical relationship between the colonies and the metropolis ensured that internal development was an elusive dream. What this meant, in essence, was that the export trade (primarily in two or more export commodities), the monopoly of markets, and the absence of industries, as promoted by the colonial states, ensured that post-independent Africa lacked the necessary resources for development. In fact, one could argue that independence in Africa was largely a political theatre and did not translate into economic independence, since the policies of the colonial government, as noted earlier, fostered dependence on the metropolitan economies.

[18] Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 54.

Coupled with this was the fact that, after independence, Africa also saw the flight of existing colonial capital and industries, which further placed economic pressure on the continent's newly independent states. Thenceforth, the political elites of these newly independent states, who sought to improve the lot of their countries by promoting industrial development, regarded as an index of economic development, and by building infrastructure and facilities, were largely crippled by the system they inherited. As such, they sought external aid to support their development.

As pointed out by Ake in his *Democracy and Development in Africa* The first post-independence development plans in Africa; Nigeria's Development Plan, 1962-68; Kenya's First Development Plan, 1966-70; Tanzania's First Plan, 1964 -69; Zambia's White Paper on Industrial Policy, 1964; Malt's Rapport sure le Plan Quinquennial de Dévelopement Eco-nomique et Social de la Republique due Mali, 1961-1965-all assumed capital, technological, market, and management dependence. Indeed, the Nigerian plan projected that 50 percent of capital requirements would be sourced externally; Tanzania's plan projected that 78 percent of development expenditure would be financed externally.[19]

Similarly, the existence of the Bretton Woods institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, has continued to increase Africa's over-reliance on external aid, which has made Africa's external debt grow exponentially. In a study conducted by Okwudiba Nnoli, he states, "Africa south of the Sahara had to pay 5.4 billion dollars in debt servicing in 1982… it also had to pay over 1.17 billion dollars in debt servicing to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during this period"[20] What this essentially means for Africa's international relations is that, after independence, the problem of development compelled Post-Colonial African leaders to seek capital externally, particularly from their former colonial masters, thereby leaving Africa dependent on external forces for its development.

Africa's International Trade

In addition, given the system of promoting primary commodities and importing industrialized products, Africa's international trade has remained tied to the formal economies of its colonial overlords. It should be emphasized that colonialism ensured that European imperialist

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[19] Claude Ake, Democracy and Development in Africa (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1996), 66–67.

[20] Okwudiba Nnoli, "Africa and World Peace: An African Perspective," Nigerian Journal of International Affairs 14, no. 2 (1988): 92–115.

monopolized their colonies, which in turn created exclusive markets bought for primary and industrial products. What this essentially means is that French Africa served France's interests, while British Africa served Britain's and could not trade with other foreign powers. In fact, after independence, this tradition continued with only subtle changes in trading partners, such as trade with the U.S, Russia, and others. Nevertheless, what should be emphasized is that Africa's international trade is largely characterized by the export of primary commodities such as cocoa, groundnut, and even crude oil, which has taken center stage in most African states as their primary export commodity. To buffer this point, as highlighted in WorkMotion's Angola Country Profile, oil production is the foundation of the Angolan economy, contributing approximately 45% to GDP and accounting for 90% of all exports.[21]

This case study is indeed reflective of the general conditions prevailing in Africa's international trade and, in essence, means that the colonial tradition of externally oriented foreign trade has continued even to contemporary times. One must also add that this intensive export of primary commodities has serious implications for Africa's balance of payments. Given that the commodities exported are mainly in their raw form, the prices accrued to African states, aside from being determined by external forces is also relatively low compared to exporting processed commodities what this means essentially is the fact that Africa which is largely dependent on imports from the industrialized metropolis given the low prices attained from export receipts is not able to purchase imports thenceforth a balance of payment deficit. To graphically illustrate this point, Nigeria, for example, in the late 1977 and 1978, the demand for Nigeria's low-sulfur crude decreased as oil became available from the North Sea, Alaska, and Mexico; in fact, from 1979 to 1980, when oil shortages and prices increased, demand for Nigerian crude remained sluggish until 1990. Thus, it led to a large trade deficit from 1978 through 1983.

Africa and International Security Agreements

Indeed, from the analysis of the colonial state presented earlier, one would find that it failed to encourage any form of industrialization on the continent. Accordingly, it is not surprising that virtually all independent African states are arms buyers rather than producers, given the absence of an arms industry. This situation has necessarily forced many African states to seek security arrangements, pacts, and agreements with other states on the international stage, given their

[21] "Workmotion Angola Country Profile" Accessed May 26, 2026 https:/workman.com/countries/angola/

military inadequacies. According to T. A. Imobighe, these agreements have mainly been between Africa and industrial powers such as the U.S, Britain, and France, who formerly held colonies in Africa. He further states that while some of them prefer to go to the open market with their shopping lists to procure military requirements, others prefer to tie their armed forces' equipment to particular countries under formal arrangements.[22]

Intervention by France has led some commentators to describe France, particularly during this period, as the "Gendarme of Africa," Africa's policeman.

The implication is that even after independence, the inadequacies of the militaries of many African states, inherited from their colonial past, have ensured that their security arrangements remain inexplicably tied to foreign powers, and in most cases to their former colonial overlords, as is evident in the case of France.

Africa's Status in the International System

The low level of development, shaped by the vagaries of the colonial system, has ensured that Africa remains economically, technologically, scientifically, and industrially backward in the global system. In fact, the existence of categories such as the Global North, which represents the developed areas of the world, and the Global South, which encompasses underdeveloped regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, readily reveals Africa's status in the international system. While Africa has participated immensely in international activities it has not been accorded the same relevance or recognition from other powers due to its backward nature One example that glaringly drives the point home is the fact that the United Nations since its establishment has refused to grant any African state a seat in its permanent security council which consist of powers such as the U.K, U.S, China, France, Russia, who possess veto powers binding on all other member states of the organization.

Conclusion

A dispassionate assessment of this paper revealed that the relationship in the early nineteenth century was that of cooperation, diplomacy, and mutual economic interests. Both engaged in commercial activities that benefited both parties; Europeans depended on African rulers and merchants to access markets, resources, and trade routes, making the relationship

[22] Thomas A. Imogbighe, African States and Defence Agreements with Foreign Powers: The Negation of non-Allignment' Nigerian Journal of International Affairs 4, no 1 (1978): 75-88

relatively cordial and interdependent. Meanwhile, as the nineteenth century progressed, this relationship changed due to industrial capitalism in Europe, which brought increased demand for raw materials, new markets, and investment opportunities. These economic interests of the colonists, therefore, brought intense rivalry among the Europeans, which eventually shifted European policy from partnership to domination. Thus, cooperation gave way to conquest, leading to colonial rule across Africa. With the use of military force, political manipulation, and economic control, European powers destroyed many existing African political, cultural, and economic structures.

Thus, the change in African-European relations from cooperation to conquest was driven primarily by European colonial economic interests. What occurred asa a relationship based on trade and mutual benefit evolved into one of exploitation and political subjugation, which eventually laid the foundation for the colonial experience that shaped Africa's subsequent historical method. Since then, Africa has remained perpetually dependent and subservient in its relations with the international community. Indeed, Africa's international relations, as gleaned from this paper, particularly in terms of its developmental efforts and international trade, have not been able to abolish the structures and ties formed during the colonial period and have remained entrenched in a vicious circle within the global fabric. Thus, the historical transformation as exposed in this paper provides important insights into the arrival of Europeans, their activities, the origins of colonial rule, and the long-term integration of Africa into the global economic system.

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