

**T.C.
ISTANBUL GEDİK UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**THE IMPACT OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION ON
EUROPEAN COLONIALISM IN AFRICA: FROM THE LATE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY TO THE OUTBREAK OF WWI**

MASTER THESIS

Melike KİMENÇE

Department of Political Science and International Relations

Political Science and International Relations Master in English Program

**JULY 2025
ISTANBUL**

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İstanbul 2025



T.C.
İSTANBUL GEDİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü

Jüri Tez Onay Formu

19/09/2025

LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ

Bu çalışma 17/09/2025 tarihinde aşağıdaki jüri tarafından Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler Anabilim Dalı, Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkiler (Tezli Yüksek Lisans) (İngilizce) Programı Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare on my honor that the Master's thesis titled “The Impact of the Industrial Revolution on European Colonialism in Africa: From the Late Eighteenth Century to the Outbreak of WWI” has been written without resorting to any assistance that would contravene scientific ethics and traditions throughout all processes from the project phase to its conclusion, and that the works I have utilized are those listed in the Bibliography, and they have been used with proper citation (19/09/2025).

Melike KİMENÇE

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THE IMPACT OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION ON EUROPEAN COLONIALISM IN AFRICA: FROM THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY TO THE OUTBREAK OF WWI

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the impact of the Industrial Revolution on European colonialism in Africa from the late eighteenth century to the outbreak of the First World War. It explores how industrialization, technological advancements, and ideological discourses collectively reshaped colonial practices and intensified Europe's exploitation of the African continent. The study argues that the Industrial Revolution not only provided Europe with the economic and technological means to dominate Africa but also produced new justifications for colonial expansion through ideas such as the "civilizing mission." Employing a comparative qualitative approach, the research analyzes the economic, political, and social dimensions of colonialism and their long-term consequences for African societies. The findings reveal that colonialism, supported by industrial capitalism, led to the systematic extraction of Africa's natural resources, political fragmentation, and the erosion of indigenous cultural systems. However, the thesis also emphasizes Africa's agency—its resistance movements, regional cooperation, and cultural resilience—as crucial components of its historical experience. By highlighting the interconnection between ideology, technology, and colonialism, this study contributes to a more multidimensional understanding of Africa's colonial past and its enduring legacy.

Keywords: *Industrial Revolution, Colonialism, Africa, European Imperialism, Civilizing Mission.*

SANAYİ DEVRİMİNİN AVRUPA'DA AFRIKA SÖMÜRGEÇİLİĞİ ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ: ON SEKİZİNCİ YÜZYILIN SONLARINDAN I. DÜNYA SAVAŞI'NIN BAŞLANGICINA KADAR

ÖZET

Bu tez, Sanayi Devrimi'nin Avrupa sömürgeçiliği üzerindeki etkisini 18. yüzyılın sonlarından Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın başlangıcına kadar olan dönemde incelemektedir. Çalışma, sanayileşme, teknolojik gelişmeler ve ideolojik söylemlerin sömürgecilik pratiklerini nasıl dönüştürdüğünü ve Avrupa'nın Afrika üzerindeki sömürü faaliyetlerini nasıl yoğunlaştırdığını ortaya koymaktadır. Tez, Sanayi Devrimi'nin yalnızca Avrupa'ya Afrika'yı ekonomik ve teknolojik olarak hâkimiyeti altına alma gücü kazandırmadığını, aynı zamanda “uygarlık misyonu” gibi kavramlar aracılığıyla sömürgeci genişlemeye yeni meşruiyet alanları yarattığını savunmaktadır. Karşılaştırmalı ve nitel bir yöntem benimseyen araştırma, sömürgeçiliğin ekonomik, politik ve sosyal boyutlarını ve bunların Afrika toplumları üzerindeki uzun vadeli sonuçlarını analiz etmektedir. Bulgular, sanayi kapitalizmiyle desteklenen sömürgeçiliğin Afrika'nın doğal kaynaklarının sistematik biçimde yağmalanmasına, siyasi parçalanmaya ve yerli kültürel yapıların zayıflamasına yol açtığını göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte, Afrika'nın direniş hareketleri, bölgesel dayanışma örnekleri ve kültürel sürekliliği, kıtanın tarihsel deneyiminde önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Bu çalışma, ideoloji, teknoloji ve sömürgecilik arasındaki etkileşimi vurgulayarak Afrika'nın sömürge geçmişine ve bu geçmişin günümüze uzanan mirasına çok boyutlu bir bakış sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Sanayi Devrimi, Sömürgecilik, Afrika, Avrupa Emperyalizmi, Uygarlaştırma Misyonu.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Industrial Revolution, which began in England in late 18th century and soon spread to other parts of Europe, brought about not only economic and technological transformations but also significant shifts in the global balance of power. During this period, industrialized European states turned their attention to different parts of the world in order to meet their increasing demand for raw materials and to find new markets for their manufactured goods. In this context, the African continent became a central focus due to its abundant natural resources, strategic location, and political structures that were susceptible to colonization. From mid-19th century onwards, European colonial expansion in Africa accelerated, and with the period known as the “Scramble for Africa,” much of the continent came under European control. This study examines the impact of the Industrial Revolution on European colonial activities in Africa from a historical perspective, focusing on economic interests, technological superiority, the development of transportation networks, and ideological approaches such as the “civilizing mission.”

Industrialization, which began in 18th century with textile production, marked a shift from human and animal power to machine-based production (Küçükcalay, 1997). During this period, when capital emerged as a symbol of power for European states, production became a matter of critical importance. In this context, numerous initiatives and innovations were introduced to optimize production processes and increase output. Developments in transportation technologies, such as steamships and railways, allowed European powers to penetrate deeper into the African interior. Communication tools like the telegraph enabled colonial governments to manage their territories from a distance.

Since the early stages of industrialization, every advancement and innovation in the field contributed to the successful emergence of industrial capitalism in Europe. However, this process also brought with it heritable political, social, and historical problems. These inherited disruptions were particularly visible in the African continent. Although Africa had been influenced by various European

economic systems before the modern era, it came under the most intense influence during the rise of industrial capitalism. The intensification of modern capitalism during this period was closely linked to the expansion of markets and development of new technologies very promptly (Wood, 2002). The stability and eventual growth of a successful economic system created unprecedented wealth, leading to intense competition among European powers. At the same time, they needed to develop their industries, maintain control over their transforming societies, and succeed in the colonial race. For this reason, the capitalist dynamics that emerged around industrialization played a central role in making Africa the focal point of colonial expansion and in drawing major European states into imperial competition. These new economic dynamics pushed Europe to establish more direct and systematic control over regions that still maintained pre-industrial social structures. The new form of colonialism, shaped by the impact of the Industrial Revolution, led to the systematic extraction of Africa's economic resources, the disintegration of local social structures, and the entrenchment of colonial administrations. In this process, triggered by industrialization, Africa was transformed not only into a source of raw materials but also into a field of implementation for Europe's modernization and expansionist agendas.

In addressing the process of Africa's restructuring, all relevant concepts will be defined in a limited and contextualized manner, in accordance with the scope of the thesis. It is essential that the Industrial Revolution and the various dynamics involved in this process are examined within an interdisciplinary framework to maintain coherence throughout the study. Accordingly, the second chapter will focus on the theoretical foundations of the Industrial Revolution, with a particular emphasis on the concept of capitalism. The perspectives of key thinkers (Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and Max Weber) will be analyzed and compared in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of this concept. To further clarify the concepts of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution, both will be discussed within their historical backgrounds and examined through their various manifestations in more recent history. Their respective developmental trajectories will also be evaluated. In the same chapter, colonialism, as another fundamental concept, will be analyzed in terms of its historical evolution. The colonial practices of European states that took part in this process will be presented in a chronological

manner. Although colonial movements in Africa and the key actors emerged at different times, they evolved as interconnected components of a broader system. Different states, driven by similar interests, successively increased their presence and intensified their activities across the African continent. The final part of the chapter will focus on the phenomena of slavery and the slave trade, which deeply impacted Africa both socially and economically.

The second part of the study will analyze how three major European powers (Britain, France, and Germany) participated in the process during the peak of industrialization. Within this context, the political, economic, and social developments that shaped the trajectories of these states will be examined under specific subheadings. Each of these powers experienced unique historical events that significantly influenced their industrialization processes and colonial policies. Some of these developments extended beyond national borders and impacted Europe as a whole. The race for colonies and the desire to become dominant powers on the continent were additional driving forces that shaped these historical processes and transformed the balance of power in Africa.

The final chapter will focus on the central argument of the thesis: the ways in which colonialism, fueled by industrialization, affected Africa in the period leading up to the First World War. One of the most significant elements in this context is the “civilizing mission” undertaken by European missionaries. Under this mission, the white race asserted dominance in numerous aspects of African life, from internal governance and economic affairs to religion and education, imposing its influence in line with its own interests. As a result, Africans, having already lost their territorial integrity, were also deprived of their social and cultural structures.

1.1 Aim of the Study

The main aim of this study is to examine the impact of the Industrial Revolution on European colonialism in Africa from a multidimensional perspective. By analyzing the economic, technological, political, and ideological dimensions of this influence, the research seeks to understand how Africa was transformed into a colonial space during 19th century. In this framework, the thesis not only analyzes a historical phenomenon but also aims to shed light on the historical roots of Africa’s position in today’s global system.

Ultimately, Europe exerted to survive and sustain this transformation it initiated. Yet, these revolutionary changes occurred at the same time as the period in which colonialism still existed in some ways. While European colonization in Africa predates the Industrial Revolution, the onset of industrialization dramatically altered the motivations, methods, and impacts of colonial expansion. The growing need for raw materials, new markets, and cheap labor, combined with technological advances such as steamships and weaponry, enabled European powers to penetrate deeper into the African continent. However, this transformation raises key questions about the extent to which industrialization directly influenced colonial strategies, the socio-economic consequences for African societies, and how this period laid the groundwork for long term structural inequalities.

As compared to its later generations, the First Industrial Revolution should not be evaluated solely in terms of technological and economic advancements or achievements. Firstly, what distinguishes it from subsequent industrial revolutions is that it was the initial one. Another important characteristic is that it did not merely trigger a technological transformation, but also led to profound social changes. However, although many sources discuss its positive and negative aspects from technological or economic perspectives, the impact it had on the African continent goes far beyond its actual purpose. This impact emerged indirectly through the expansion of colonialism in Africa.

Ultimately, all these evaluations lead to the assumption that the Industrial Revolution not only provided the technological and economic means for European powers to expand their colonial ambitions in Africa, but also fundamentally reshaped the nature, scope, and intensity of colonization on the continent.

1.2 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and historical approach to examine the impact of the Industrial Revolution on European colonization in Africa. The research is primarily based on secondary sources, through which key historical processes, economic motivations, and ideological frameworks are analyzed.

The main materials used in this study include academic books, journal articles, and theoretical works from the fields of history, political economy, and

colonial studies. These sources are examined to explore how industrialization in Europe influenced colonial expansion into Africa and how it shaped the long term transformation of African societies under imperial rule. The research employs a thematic content analysis, focusing on recurring themes such as the demand for raw materials, the role of technological superiority, ideological justifications like the “civilizing mission” and patterns of economic exploitation. These themes are used to trace the structural relationship between industrial development and colonial strategies.

This is an interdisciplinary study that considers both the economic and ideological dimensions of historical change. The analysis does not only focus on European developments but also addresses how these transformations were projected onto the African continent and the consequences they caused.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this study is grounded in capitalism and modern capitalism. These theoretical perspectives provide guidance in addressing the research problem and in establishing the relationships between variables. This section elaborates on the fundamental concepts underlying the study and situates them within the relevant body of literature. To ensure conceptual clarity, the definitions offered by various scholars are examined, and the specific meanings adopted in the context of this research are outlined.

2.1 Capitalism and Modern Capitalism

In this section of the study, the concepts of capitalism and modern capitalism are examined in terms of their theoretical relationships with the main elements of the research. First, the meanings of these concepts are explained, followed by a consideration of their historical processes and important evaluations made by the pioneers of capitalism and modern capitalism.

The concept of capitalism emerged between the 15th and 19th centuries, a period marked by intense colonial activities, and it matured alongside the development of states and societies. According to some written sources, capitalist activities date back to the Middle Ages. Additionally, there is an old world capitalism based on agricultural labor and the slave trade. (See, 2021) Naturally, as technological capabilities and human activities increased, the meaning of capitalism evolved. In particular, towards late 19th century, the Industrial Revolution specialized the 'trade' that forms the foundation of capitalism, and as a result of this evolution, it shaped the relations between states and societies. In this context, explaining and understanding the concepts of capitalism and modern capitalism respectively can contribute holistically to the aim of the study.

As mentioned above, modern capitalism emerged after certain important conditions and opportunities developed and changed. Therefore, it can be defined as an economic reform and developmental phase of capitalism. Before this, the concept

of capitalism functioned somewhat differently in a systematic way. Conceptually, Elaine Sternberg defines capitalism as a system where all goods and services necessary to meet human needs are transformed into marketable products for profit, and trade becomes dependent on the market. (Sternberg, 2015) In addition to profit from goods and services, the commodification and sale of labor power in the market is also one of the fundamental features of this system. (Wood, 2002) However, in this market, the true owners of the goods and services, which constantly exist and accumulate capital, are called “economic actors.” What makes capitalism different from other social systems is that these actors depend on the market to access the means of production. (Wood, 2002)

According to many sources, capitalism emerged in Western Europe and quickly spread its influence to many regions and continents. This explains why the main economic actors are concentrated in certain areas, leading to uneven development in these regions. Throughout history, economic development has occurred mainly in specific regions, in proportion to the development of societies. The main reason for this economic growth in certain regions is also the emergence of capitalism.

2.1.1 Historical background

The concept of capitalism has been interpreted and analyzed from various perspectives throughout history, depending on the structure of societies and states. Capitalism has continuously transformed itself as well as the societies in which it exists, adapting to contemporary conditions while essentially remaining the same, and has evolved into new dimensions. Many prominent theorists have evaluated capitalism—a concept with an interdisciplinary character—either positively or negatively at a systemic level, across different historical periods and from different viewpoints. The main objective, however, is to understand the nature of capitalism.

One of the first significant theorists on capitalism, Adam Smith—often referred to as the “Father of Capitalism”—explained the system through the labor theory of value. According to Smith, as long as labor exists and increases, capitalism will generate endless wealth and promote prosperity. He also argued that the value of any good can only be measured through labor, as every product or service purchased with money essentially represents the labor spent to produce it. (Smith, 2005) Indeed,

during the period in which Smith made his economic evaluations, European countries were transitioning from commercial capitalism to industrial capitalism. For this reason, the development of industry and the fact that human labor began to generate more capital than commercial activities brought the concept of labor to the forefront. (Gençoğlu, 2020) The increase in the labor force naturally led to a rise in capital as well. The surplus and continuity in production contributed to capital accumulation and growing wealth in certain countries. For this reason, Smith viewed mercantilism as an obstacle to production and development, and therefore advocated the laissez-faire policy. At a certain point, it became necessary to reduce state intervention in trade and production in order to facilitate free economic circulation and development.

Karl Marx, on the other hand, examines the concept of labor by analyzing the relationship between the producer and the product. According to Marx, in order for the producer to claim ownership of the product they have created, they must have direct control over it. This control involves a direct physical connection or ownership—that is, direct possession of both the product and the means of production. (Gartman, 1978) In this way, the producer can engage in meaningful and beneficial production. However, the capitalist system fundamentally disrupts the bond between the producer and the product. Capitalism breaks this connection and turns the product into a “commodity” for human use. The value of a product is measured by the labor invested in it, and the value of labor is determined by the amount of time dedicated to the production of that product. (Marx, 2004, as cited in Gençoğlu, 2020) By its very nature, capitalism requires the continuous accumulation and expansion of capital. With industrialization, more efficient production methods enabled greater output in less time, which damaged the producer-product relationship—one of the key components of the “labor process” that Marx emphasized. Moreover, Marx argues that producers who do not own the means of production and feel no sense of belonging to their work eventually lose their skills and capabilities as well. (Gartman, 1978) Another major critique Marx offers regarding capitalism is class inequality. He argues that social classes have existed throughout history, and that industrialization created two main classes: the property-owning bourgeoisie and the working-class proletariat (Marx, 1996). The emergence of a system based on private property, driven by industrialization, led to the

exploitation of workers by property owners. The bourgeoisie appropriate the surplus value generated from production, thereby exploiting the working class and reinforcing social dominance. (Gartman, 1978) Marx's critique in this regard can be considered valid. The class divide between capital owners and the working class—whose labor increases the profits of those owners—has continued to grow. By its very nature, capitalism aims for the unlimited accumulation of capital. This accumulation is achieved through ongoing and increasing production. As Marx explains, the surplus value generated through labor is captured by property owners, allowing them to accumulate wealth continuously.

On the other hand, workers are subjected to fixed and limited wages determined by the capitalists for their labor. In this sense, labor under capitalism has been reduced to wage labor. In other words, within the capitalist system, the working class functions merely as a component turning the gears of production. Neither the functioning mechanism nor the resulting product belongs to the worker.

Marx highlights the difference between feudalism and capitalism by examining the production methods left to peasants. (Gartman, 1978; Marx, 2003) Although feudal lords legally owned the land, the process of production was largely left to the peasants, allowing them to develop a sense of ownership and commitment to their work. In contrast, modern capitalism, which emerged through industrialization, resulted in the complete alienation of the working class from the production process. Marx's theory of class division under capitalism reflects how society transitioned into the era of modern capitalism through industrialization. Before 19th century, capitalism was primarily commercial in nature. With the rise of industrialization, the division between those who work and those who employ became more pronounced, creating a class gap far greater than in previous historical periods (See, 2021).

Those who did not own the means of production were forced to sell their labor power under the authority of property owners in order to survive. The fact that capitalists earned significantly more than what they paid workers for their labor directly intensified this class disparity. Marx interpreted this situation as a form of exploitation, where capitalist profit is essentially derived from the unpaid labor of workers. According to him, if the means of production had remained in the hands of

the original producers, capital accumulation would not occur, and there would be no party subjected to exploitation.(Marx, 2003)

On the other hand, Max Weber presents an analysis that contrasts with Marx's perspective. He identifies the essence of capitalism with the religious and moral values found in Western societies, and defines 19th century modern capitalism as a stage shaped by "rational development." Significant social changes occurred as a result of religious reforms that began in 16th century with the German monk Martin Luther and continued with Jean Calvin. Luther, who published influential doctrines especially on work, initiated reforms within Christianity and gained influence over large masses. In Lutheranism, it is argued that devotion to God is only possible through doing good work, being disciplined, and working hard. Similarly, in Calvinism, diligence and honesty are prioritized, and individuals are expected to perform their duties well in order to be among the "chosen." The Protestant faith, which spread across many parts of Europe through the major Reformation movement against the Catholic Church, played a significant role in the transformation and rationalization of social dynamics, which in turn contributed to the development of economic structures.

Weber argues that Protestantism served as a foundational influence for capitalism and interacted with it extensively. He emphasizes that skilled labor and workers in technical or commercial fields were predominantly Protestant and points out that economically developed nations often originated from regions where reform movements opposed the Catholic Church and traditionalist economic values (Weber, 2021). As can be understood from Weber's analysis, the emergence of modern capitalism and subsequent economic development were largely driven by changes in societal mentality—particularly in moral and religious dimensions. In a sense, it was society's ambition and desire to work that encouraged the rise of modern capitalism.

2.1.2 The rise of industrial capitalism

In addition to the term *modern capitalism* being used interchangeably with *industrial capitalism* in the literature, Weber himself also referred to this concept as *modern industrial capitalism* in his works (Weber, 2004). Indeed, it was industry that initiated the process of modern capitalism, became influential across almost all of Europe, and ultimately led to the greatest economic development on the continent.

Industrial advancements first took hold in England, which had dominance in maritime trade, and later spread to France and several other countries. At the root of the emergence and growth of industry lay commercial capitalism. In other words, the intensity of maritime and colonial trade during that period formed the foundation of modern capitalism (See, 2021). Of course, for capitalism to emerge and sustain itself, accumulated capital is essential. In particular, the increase in exports through maritime trade in England and the processing and commercialization of raw materials obtained from colonies accelerated this process. In essence, the entire economic process developed naturally as even the smallest economic units evolved over time and with opportunity. Each component interacts with another, evolving and giving rise to new forms.

In certain stages of raw material processing, machines began to be used. As mechanization became more widespread, business owners who had accumulated capital expanded their operations by assembling machines, leading to the emergence of large scale industries. Among the artisans who had once operated on a similar level, some managed to acquire this capital, grew their businesses, and transitioned into the role of employers. They then began to hire other artisans to work for them as wage laborers.(See, 2021) In this way, the process of industrialization marked the beginning of modern capitalism.

2.1.2.1 Commercial capitalism and mercantilism

As mentioned in the previous section, the wave of exploration and expansionist policies of Western Europe gave rise to a commercial boom that significantly shaped the transition of capitalism into the modern age. Since commercial capitalism is considered one of the first steps toward industrialization and industrial capitalism, it is important to explain and understand this period along with its mercantilist practices. Indeed, with industrialization, Europe experienced substantial wealth accumulation and expanded into colonial regions to secure markets. As a result, commercial capitalism came to an end, or perhaps more accurately, evolved into a new form.

The discovery of the Americas brought vast reserves of silver and gold, while the trade routes stretching from Africa to East India provided valuable goods such as spices and silk, all of which contributed to Europe's increasing wealth and capital

accumulation. The main actors behind this long-distance and profitable trade were the merchants of the time. Following the collapse of feudalism, merchants were able to conduct trade more freely and without restrictions. As a result, nation states enriched themselves through the raw materials and goods obtained from newly discovered territories.

Relying also on the principles of mercantilism, these nation states concluded that exports were more profitable than imports and thus aimed to expand and sustain trade. Consequently, with the merchants and the bourgeoisie, who became a new social class with changing economic dynamics, states began to implement some economic policies to protect and support their commercial activities. These policies were grounded in the ideology of mercantilism. At its core, this ideology aimed to strengthen and sustain the economy through direct state control, thereby reinforcing the power of the nation state in line with the emerging economic order. (Aydemir & Güneş, 2006) According to mercantilist doctrine, it was necessary to legitimize colonial activities which were the main pillar of commercial capitalism, by using the power of the state. In a context of competition among colonial powers, the emphasis was placed on the importance of national wealth. Furthermore, precious metals obtained through colonialism were regarded as the primary measure of a nation's prosperity. (Gençoğlu, 2020) Through this doctrine, states explicitly declared their aim of generating profit through colonialism and legitimized such practices. As a result of the policies implemented under this framework, merchants were able to protect their commercial activities.

With the rise of mercantilist ideology, colonialism expanded, and European states accumulated wealth through the trade of raw materials. Over time, this wealth laid the foundation for the development of industrial capitalism. However, each state implemented mercantilist ideology through distinct policies, shaped by their own interests and values. For example, England focused primarily on maritime trade and industrialization; France adopted state-led policies aimed at increasing industrial production; the Netherlands, as a historical maritime trading nation, pursued policies to maintain and promote free trade; Germany exercised control over industry and commerce through state-appointed financial officials; and Austria applied mercantilist policies in a strict manner, introducing significant reforms. (Aydemir & Güneş, 2006)

The transformation of commercial capitalism in European countries into industrial capitalism over time occurred as a result of changing and developing conditions and opportunities. This process also encompasses the transition from the medieval period to the modern era. In particular, the increase in geographical discoveries, the emergence of new trade routes, and improvements in transportation significantly contributed to Europe's economic and social development. The expansion of trade routes increased the inflow of raw materials into countries, enriching both the state and certain segments of society, such as merchants and the bourgeois class. With the growing wealth of these groups, the guild system began to decline, and wage-based production in specific regions evolved into mass production. As commercial activities intensified and production became more liberalized, innovations in technical fields began to emerge in response to rising needs. This economic transformation, in a sense, also emerged as a result of structural changes within society. The emergence of business owners and a wage-earning working class, along with the increase in urban production and industrial activity, contributed to the decline of commercial capitalism. As raw materials obtained from the colonies were processed in industrial facilities and offered for sale in the market, production based on cheap labor began to generate significantly higher profits. (Gençoğlu, 2020) The mercantilist understanding, whose primary aim was to accumulate wealth by obtaining the greatest amount of raw materials, was eventually replaced by industrial capitalism, which embraced the principle of maximizing production and profit with minimal cost. The new economic strategy of European states now focused on expanding in order to increase production and access to larger markets. In this context, the one of Smith's view of the mercantilist belief that national wealth depended on exports rather than production was fundamentally reversed. (Smith, 2005)

2.1.2.2 Resources utilized during the industrilization process

By the end of 18th century, commercial capitalism had begun to decline. The silver and gold reserves acquired by European countries from their colonies had reached remarkable levels. However, the abundance generated by the mercantilist ideology eventually led to the collapse of the system itself. The increase in the production and export of precious metals caused a proportional rise in the prices of goods and products on the market. The surplus of money further stimulated demand

for goods. Consequently, rising prices led to an economic crisis. As a result of this crisis, it became clear that possessing precious metals held little value in comparison to the production of goods. Adam Smith, a contemporary of this period, theorized that the mercantilist system would ultimately bring about its own demise. As mentioned in the relevant sections above, he argued that wealth could only be created through production (or labor) and this indeed proved to be the case.

Thus, Europe, which had now directly shifted its focus to production, first enabled the development of the textile and iron industries. Looking even further back, during the medieval age, it was the cloth industry that had pioneered the rise of commercial capitalism. (See, 2021) In this period, when trade was almost entirely based on agriculture, wool weaving held a significant place. Wool purchased from farmers by merchants was processed into cloth and then transported to markets for sale. During this time, cloth production was so extensive that, according to Henri Eugene See, the search for more distant markets to sell cloth particularly facilitated England's maritime expansion. At this point, it is also likely that England's relatively more flexible economic policies compared to other European countries positively influenced its expansionist activities. In the medieval age, when textile production was at its peak, the greatest competition among European states was centered around this industry. The textile industry, which primarily operated for the upper classes of society (such as nobles and aristocrats), expanded into new markets and developed further as competition increased. (Pedersen & Nosch, 2009) The pioneers of the wool and cloth industry at the time were England and the Netherlands. However, England completed its economic transformation earlier than other states thanks to its expanding markets, access to raw materials such as cotton and silk from its colonies, and the invention of machinery used in its industry. Especially the processing of cotton imported from the American continent by these machines led to the emergence of the renowned industrial regions such as Lancashire and Manchester, making England a leading force in cotton imports. (See, 2021) In the second half of 18th century, the use of mechanized tools alongside human and animal power in the production of textiles and other goods brought speed and efficiency to industry. According to many sources, the rise of industrialization —starting in England and initiating a new era across Europe— was largely driven by the development and expansion of mechanization. The increasing importance of mechanization, as well as

the critical role of railways in commercial transportation, led to a significant rise in the demand for iron. Beyond railways, iron was also used in the construction of bridges, ships, and even some buildings. Indeed, iron was the primary material used in the production of machines themselves. Iron, which was mostly obtained in a purer form from Scandinavia and the colonies, was transformed into strong alloys such as steel and began to be produced for use not only in industry and transportation but also in various aspects of daily life. The use of iron and steel, especially in heavy industries, marked a significant step in industrial advancement. Another crucial element that had a major impact on the industrial process was coal. It served as the primary fuel for the steam engine, invented in 1712, as well as for locomotives. (Mohajan, 2019) Coal was also used for smelting and processing iron. Although the discovery and use of coal dates back to earlier periods, it can be said that its true value emerged with mechanization, as many sources emphasize that coal was one of the most essential elements forming the foundation of industrialization. In European countries with large coal basins, such as Belgium, France, Germany, and especially the United Kingdom, heavy industry developed rapidly (Fernihough & O'Rourke, 2014). Beyond industry, the use of coal by people for heating and cooking also contributed to the growing demand.. (Clark & Jacks, 2007)

Besides industrial goods, everyday consumer products also played a significant role in increasing trade and production during this period. Even before the Industrial Revolution, textile products (such as cotton, wool, silk, and linen), sugar, and spices were imported from colonies and other continental countries. With industrialization, growing urbanization, and population increase, the trade of various goods expanded further. However, before the working class was included in society, daily goods trade between states was mainly conducted for the upper classes. For example, England, France, and Germany imported products such as meat, beer, various fish, butter, and beeswax from Spain, catering to the demand of the aristocracy.(See, 2021)

The numerous opportunities brought by industrialization, along with the growing population's increasing needs, greatly promoted trade. The rise in capital accumulated by states through the trade of both raw and processed materials paved the way for new investments, marking the beginning of a new century of economic and social growth.

Starting from the late medieval period, it is always possible that the invention of significant technical tools before industrialization had an impact on the process. As is well known, the demand and interest in textiles in the West were particularly prominent during these times. The development of the textile industry is fundamentally based on this. Naturally, even before industrialization, the invention of tools such as *the fulling* machine, used in the production of textile products, dates back to the medieval period. This device, which cleans and thickens fabric by beating it and operates using water power, was first used in textile production in Italy and had spread to England and other countries by the late medieval period.(Pedersen & Nosch, 2009) In 18th century, important inventions such as the *flying shuttle* and the *spinning jenny*, developed by several English weavers and inventors, played a significant role in the process of economic and industrial development. (Mohajan, 2019) Of course, these types of tools were much more primitive and different from the machines developed after the discovery of iron. What is important here is the formation and expansion of production communities. Before the modern era, many tools were invented for various needs. These were generally devices powered by humans, animals, or water. Undoubtedly, mills are the ancestors of many tools used in different aspects of human life. The mill concept was applied in mechanized tools ranging from agriculture to mining. For example, besides fulling, watermills or windmills were used for grinding wheat, rotary watermills were used for cutting and shaping metal, and water powered paper mills were used in printing. (Munro, 2002)

The turn of states toward mercantilism and the ongoing competition among them increased the desire to access precious metals, leading to the adoption of various methods and inventions in mining. These technological advancements significantly accelerated progress during the era. Undoubtedly, this development in technology also contributed to the rapid growth of the economy. In early modern Europe, water powered mills used in iron mining were among the key factors influencing this growth. These mills powered drainage pumps that facilitated the extraction of minerals from the mines. (Munro, 2002) However, the technique of extracting minerals from underground was not as simple as one might think. For example, water mills required large amounts of water to power the wheels and move heavy loads weighing tons. Similarly, in coal basins, machines operated by water wheels using the same principle were widely used to extract coal.(Galloway, 1898)

These wheel-driven machines were, of course, developed and produced with many improvements compared to their original forms to become much more efficient. Undoubtedly, this major advancement and invention reached its peak with the steam engine. This important technology was invented in 1712 by the Englishman Thomas Newcomen. (Mohajan, 2019) The steam engine, powered by coal as fuel, was used in coal mining. The cylinders operated by coal powered engines made the extraction of coal and other minerals from underground pits more practical. However, this engine was insufficient in terms of fuel efficiency and overall performance. The person who improved Newcomen's engine to achieve higher efficiency was the Scottish inventor James Watt. (Galloway, 1898) Watt modified the cylinders and some parts of the engine, enabling it to operate with less fuel while delivering greater efficiency.

Steam engine power, which greatly contributed to production especially in heavy industry, was not the first or main element of industrialization. As mentioned in the previous section, the central factor that enabled the transition to centralized production with modern machines was actually the steam engines used earlier in the textile industry. (Morgan, Ó Gráda, and Mokyr, 2020) However, these major advancements in both industry and mining occurred after coal began to be used as fuel in engines. Thus, it can be concluded that England achieved the technological evolution of the era by developing water powered and steam powered machines through the efforts of scientists and inventors.

2.2 Definition of Colonialism

This part of the study will analyze the historical development of the concept of colonialism, along with its various dimensions shaped by the influence of the main characters. Hence, it is first necessary to explain the basic meaning of colonialism. In its simplest form, the concept of colonialism is defined by Jürgen Osterhammel and Jan Jansen as a relationship of domination. (Osterhammel and Jansen, 2023) Based on this definition, various forms of domination have existed throughout history. Colonialism, as a concept, has held different meanings across political, economic, or territorial expansionist power relations. More generally, colonialism can be described as the occupation and settlement of foreign lands by a state, followed by the exploitation of those lands. (Şahin, 2018) When examined from ancient time onward, it can be observed that colonial activities evolved into different forms in

accordance with the conditions and capacities of each historical period. Furthermore, the fact that colonialism gained distinct meanings depending on specific periods or regions—and that it is often referenced in the literature through compound terms such as “African colonialism” or “American colonialism”—demonstrates the diversity and inclusiveness of the concept. Etymologically, the word *colony* derives from the Latin *colonus*, meaning “farmer.” (Kohn & Reddy, 2006) From this original meaning, it can only be inferred that colonial populations cultivated the lands they settled. In historical terms, then, colonialism primarily aimed at the acquisition of new lands and resources. Throughout its entire historical process, colonialism has not only been based on territorial expansion but also served different purposes depending on the missions of the dominant states.

For example, ancient colonialism was generally based on conquest, access to land resources, and the port constructions to facilitate trade. In broad terms, it can be observed that two nations coexisted either in isolation or through partial integration. However, with the rise of nation states in the transition to the modern era, the motivations behind colonial expansion evolved significantly. Rather than simply competing for territorial control, states began to prioritize access to resources and wealth in the newly acquired regions.

Of course, the implementation of colonialism did not occur instantly. The process varied greatly depending on the social, political, and cultural structures of both the colonizing and colonized societies. Generally speaking, the formation of colonial settlements can be classified into three stages: initial contact and settlement, conquest, and the consolidation of the first two phases. (Osterhammel & Jansen, 2023)

2.2.1 Historical background

Historically, colonialism can be examined under two main concepts; classical colonialism and modern colonialism. As mentioned above, the cause-and-effect relationships behind ancient colonial practices are relatively easier to identify due to the conditions of the age. Ancient colonialism dates back to the Phoenicians, who established colonies as far as the Western Mediterranean. (Kavas, 2006)

During the same period, the expansionist policies of rival powers such as Rome and the Phoenicians followed different paths. While the Romans aimed to

expand their territory due to increasing needs for food and shelter caused by population growth, the Phoenicians sought to establish colonies primarily to extract valuable minerals from the newly occupied lands. (Üçler, 2022) This type of settler colonialism typically aimed to expand borders and access new resources for the state. Similarly, dominance over conquered territories through military power—such as the extraction and use of resources or the establishment of tax systems—can also be considered a form of colonialism. (Osterhammel & Jansen, 2023)

The Phoenicians, known to have existed as early as 3000 BCE within the ancient Canaanite borders in the southern Levant, developed primarily as a trading civilization due to their proximity to coastal regions. (Mark, 2018) Their expansion into nearby coastal areas and the establishment of colonies were largely driven by the desire to access new trade routes and resources. Advancing in maritime trade and renowned for their shipbuilding and seafaring skills, the Phoenicians—as noted in various sources—established small port cities along newly reached coastal areas, including islands. These settlements functioned primarily as harbors, aiming to facilitate trade routes and expand access to distant regions.

Another reason for settling in these cities was to establish centralized settlements that would reinforce trade networks. (Üçler, 2022) The first port cities founded by the Phoenicians included Tripoli, Tyre, Aradus, Simyra, Acco, Sidon, and Byblos. (Avcı, 2013) Developing their expertise in maritime trade, the Phoenicians expanded as far as the western Mediterranean coasts, where they colonised. It is evident that their primary goal was not to expand territory or build a structured state or empire. Instead, they gradually settled in the port cities of neighboring regions, established trade outposts, and integrated with local communities without facing significant conflict. This strategy enabled them to reach as far as Cyprus, the Aegean, Sicily, and the southern coasts of Spain. (Yıldırım, 2011) Although the city-states that emerged in Phoenician civilization developed independently in terms of governance, they maintained a strong cultural and commercial connection with each other under the broader identity of the Phoenicians. From this, it can be argued that the Phoenicians developed a unique model of colonization. Their maritime skills allowed them to establish coastal colonies connected to a central city, which were able to adopt local customs and coexist peacefully with indigenous populations by forming marketplaces along coastal regions. Thanks to this adaptive and trade-

oriented approach, the Phoenicians were largely unaffected by the large waves of migration caused by the Sea Peoples. Moreover, they managed to preserve their presence under the successive rules of the Assyrians, Neo-Babylonians, Persians, and eventually Alexander the Great's Macedonian Empire. (Üçler, 2022) Following the conquests, the Phoenicians regrouped along the coast of modern-day Tunisia, where they founded Carthage—what would become their most powerful and prominent colony. (Avcı, 2013) The Carthaginians maintained armies largely composed of mercenary soldiers. After expanding to Sicily, and later to the islands of Corsica and Sardinia, territorial disputes with the Greeks began. (Yıldırım, 2011) At that time, the Greek-influenced Romans held control over southern Italy and parts of Sicily. Although initial relations between Carthage and Rome were relatively amicable, conflict erupted during the First Punic War (264–241 BCE). Despite Carthage's superior naval power inflicting heavy losses on Rome, the Romans ultimately emerged victorious. (Turan, 2019) This victory was largely due to Rome's ability to mobilize support from its own colonies, rather than Greek alliances.

Greek colonization began later than that of the Phoenicians and, as mentioned above, was largely driven by population growth and the search for arable land. The Greeks first established colonies in southern Italy and then expanded eastward, settling in the Aegean region and as far as the Black Sea. (Avcı, 2013) The success of Greek colonization can be attributed to their perception of colonies as integral parts of their homeland rather than distant outposts that could be easily abandoned. (Yıldırım, 2011)

Before the Punic Wars, Roman colonies were relatively few in number and were mostly located along coastal areas. The primary goal of these early colonies was not agricultural exploitation or resource extraction, but rather the expansion of Roman influence across the Italian peninsula. (Salmon, 1955) Roman colonies were strategically positioned as military outposts to guard against potential enemies and other threats. These colonies were divided into two main categories: *cives Romani* (Roman citizen colonies) and *coloniae Latinae* (Latin colonies). While Latin colonists retained the citizenship of their local region and were excluded from full Roman rights, Roman citizen colonists were considered fully integrated members of Roman society with access to all civic privileges. (Turan, 2019) In the following years, the Roman Empire introduced legislation granting Latin colonists Roman

citizenship. As a result, the inhabitants of colonies outside Rome's borders were given dual citizenship and allowed to have the rights of Roman citizens by attaining *municipium*¹ status. (Salmon, 1955) This demonstrates that, unlike the Greek model of colonization, the Roman Empire implemented a political strategy aimed at strengthening loyalty and trust among colonial populations far from the imperial center. As Rome expanded its territory through military conquests, the number of colonies also increased. Colonies held significant importance for the Romans, both in terms of trade and access to resources. As the colonies developed, they gradually expanded and transformed into cities (as *poleis*). (Mark, 2018) These poleis were governed by local principalities. As colonies evolved into city-states governed by aristocratic elites, economic growth led to internal divisions among the population—particularly between merchants and artisans—which, in turn, gave rise to class-based tensions. (Yıldırım, 2011) Moreover, the expansion of colonies resulted in population decline within central states, leading to a shortage of labor. To address this need, a significant number of slaves were brought in, contributing to the rise of slavery. As the economy grew, city-states based on slavery spread throughout the Mediterranean and the Black Sea regions, eventually transforming into democratic systems heavily reliant on enslaved labor.

Following the prominence of the Phoenicians and Romans in ancient colonialism, another significant colonial power in history was the Genoese. After the fall of the Roman Empire in the Middle Ages, the Genoese—successful in maritime trade—rose to prominence in Italy. Starting in 11th century, they expanded from the Mediterranean to the Levantine coasts, transforming from a coastal city-state into an imperial power. (Kirk, 2020) The Genoese maintained their colonial presence in the Black Sea and Aegean regions from the Byzantine period until the fall of Constantinople to the Turks. During this period, Venice and Genoa became central hubs of economic power. (Yıldırım, 2011)

In the period from antiquity to the Middle Ages—before the emergence of nation states—the prevalence of mass migrations, borderland colonization, and overseas settler colonialism caused from the inherent of civilizations to expand territory, access natural resources, and pursue agricultural needs. (Osterhammel,

¹ “Municipium” refers to a town in ancient Rome that was granted partial Roman citizenship and governed by its own local laws.

Jansen, 2023) In such colonies, the ability of the indigenous population to maintain their existence was also closely tied to their relationship with the colonial power. In many cases, as exemplified by Rome, they led an integrated life within the colonial system. Alternatively, as in the case of the Phoenicians, the newly constructed port colonies often operated with governance structures independent from the central state, and they generally sustained their presence by exerting influence over the local populations. (Üçler, 2022) It can be concluded that colonial activities varied depending on the administrative systems and geographical locations of the colonizing powers. In later historical periods, the colonial activities of powerful and developed administrations, which had evolved from ancient civilizations into nation states, also transformed in line with different objectives. A prime example of this is seen in the expansionist policies that characterized the “Age of Discovery”, the establishment of colonial states and territories, and the ensuing competition for conquest among powerful states. This competition was primarily driven by the rise of the mercantilist system, which fueled the ambition among states to accumulate wealth. However, the mercantilist ideology—later evolving into commercial capitalism—severely transgressed ethical boundaries in terms of the European powers’ exercise of sovereignty and their understanding of rights over colonized lands and populations. So much so that the systems of governance implemented by nation states in their colonies were often far more forceful and authoritarian than those they applied within their own societies. (Osterhammel, Jansen, 2023, pp38) Although the overseas explorations initially began with the desire to obtain precious metals and were primarily planned for commercial purposes, the discovery of the Americas transformed these ventures—particularly in the case of the Spanish—into a full scale conquest project. (Smith, 2005)

Western European countries began overseas explorations with the goal of reaching the Far East. Eventually, the Genoese explorer Christopher Columbus, with support from Spain, became the first European to discover the American continent (Arikan & Demiryürek, 2018). By the late 15th and throughout 16th century, maritime dominance belonged primarily to Portugal and Spain (Smith, 2005). Spain, having conquered vast territories across North, Central, and South America, established new cities and centralized administrative systems, delegating authority to municipalities and colonial governors (Arikan & Demiryürek, 2018) Initially driven

by commercial aspirations, these explorations and conquests quickly transformed—especially for Spain and Portugal—into intensively expansionist plans, seeing these newly discovered lands as treasure in mineral resources. Simultaneously, the Venetians were engaged in colonial activities across the Eastern Mediterranean, while the Portuguese extended their presence along the Guinea coast of West Africa (Osterhammel, Jansen, 2023) However, with the discovery of the New World and its abundant wealth, maritime powers such as England, the Netherlands, France, Sweden, and Denmark also entered the race for conquest and colonization—continuing well into 17th century (Smith, 2005). Each conquest often led to massive wars and the systematic extermination of Indigenous populations.

When Europeans first arrived on the continent and encountered the native peoples, they were initially surprised by their presence and viewed them as an inferior race. This racist attitude began to soften somewhat after Pope Julius II declared that the indigenous people were also human, and Europeans started to describe them as “similar” to themselves. (Nagy, 2005) However, despite this, white colonizers continued to exploit the native populations for their own purposes, and in cases where they could not benefit from them, they killed them. To replace the massacred populations, shiploads of European laborers—mostly prisoners or orphans—were brought from Europe to work in the colonies. The first example of human transportation from Europe to the Americas occurred when Portugal brought criminals and Jews from its own territory to its early colonial settlements along the Gulf of Guinea, as part of a plan to minimize labor costs.(Bolat & Ayaz, 2021)

The discovery of the Americas was seen by European powers as the virgin lands filled full of riches. As a result, the looting of these lands began so rapidly that, after exhausting parts of them, Europeans turned their attention back to the African continent and continued their political and social activities there as well. Unlike earlier forms of colonization, in the New World, production systems were established based on the extraction of valuable minerals and agricultural goods. Native populations, along with enslaved people imported from other regions, were forced to work under harsh conditions. Since colonization in the American Continent was based on permanent settlement, the level of violence and oppression imposed on the indigenous peoples by Europeans reached extreme levels. (Johnston and Lawson, 2005) With the massacre of the indigenous people who resisted colonization,

imperialism in the following periods came to be seen as a concept rooted in greed, exploitation, and cruelty. Especially after the Spanish and Portuguese, the arrival of the British and French in the New World further intensified this rivalry. Their expeditions to North America resulted in more permanent settlements. Migrants from France and England turned to agriculture—one of the most significant resources of the new continent—as their main means of survival. By settling in the interior regions, these European settlers contributed to the long-term establishment and expansion of colonial presence in North America. (Arikan & Demiryürek, 2018)

2.2.2 Colonization in Africa

The emergence of European states as major Atlantic powers through maritime trade and the establishment of large overseas colonies characterizes the 15th and 16th centuries (See, 2021). These states, which played a crucial role in the rise of capitalism by obtaining consumer goods directly from producing lands, expanded their colonial activities from Africa to Asia and the Americas. Eventually, this expansion led to a vast slave trade, which ultimately returned to its point of origin in Africa.

For this reason, this section will examine the development of colonial powers through two distinct historical phases of Africa's colonization. Initially sparked by the overseas ambitions of two dominant European states, this process quickly escalated into a competitive race involving several others. The consequences of this race brought about significant changes—many of which had long-acting detrimental effects on the African continent.

2.2.2.1 The era of Portuguese and Spanish colonization in Africa

In 15th century, Portugal and Spain held a dominant position in maritime trade and began their overseas expansion by capturing Ceuta in the Strait of Gibraltar in 1415 (Rodney, 2011). Their primary goal was to reach the Indian Ocean, they established port bases along the African coastline to expand their network of connections. Over time, this ambition led to increasing military incursions into the Maghreb region. The underlying reason for these invasions was neither a continuation of the Crusades nor an action fueled by the confidence gained from victories over Muslims in Andalusia. The primary motivation stemmed from the instinctive drive of European nation states to expand their influence based on

mercantilist ideologies and secure control over trade by seeking new sources of wealth. Initially, Spanish and Portuguese navy aimed to expand into the Mediterranean basin, but they were unable to sustain their presence there due to the military superiority of the Turks. (Kavas, 2006.) The expansion of Europeans to the Red Sea was kind of a threat to the Holy Lands and it concerned all Muslim states. Many of the territories in North and East Africa that had been occupied by Europeans were reclaimed. It also caused a temporary disruption in their expansion plans. When Spain and Portugal were unable to expand further in the Mediterranean basin, they redirected their fleets toward the western parts of Africa. They, then, reached the Canary Islands, Madeira, and the Azores the West African coast. (Elik and Bal, 2014) Their primary and most important goal was to discover a new sea route to the East Indies and take it under their control. Unable to move freely through the Mediterranean as they had planned, the Portuguese first captured ports in Morocco, and later, in 1495, reached the Cape of Good Hope and took control of the ports there as well. (Rodney, 2011) The Portuguese—relying also on the authority of the Pope—initially began missionary activities in the regions they captured. The Portuguese sought to extract gold from their colonies, and despite the limited availability of gold, the Gold Coast—present-day Ghana—remained a central point of interest for Europeans until 17th century. (Rodney, 2011) Later on, in addition to gold, many regions were taken from Africans for other valuable minerals such as copper, diamonds, iron, and tin (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012). Alongside this, products obtained from agriculture and other resources—such as spices, cotton, and ivory—began to be traded with Europe (Elik and Bal, 2014). With the rise of agricultural trade and the growing demand for labor, the forced labor of colonized peoples eventually led to the beginning of the slave trade, first initiated by the Portuguese. The Portuguese extended their slavery system—originally developed and monopolized on the Azores and Madeira Islands—to plantations they established along the West African coast. (Marques & Gois, 2019). After capturing the Cape of Good Hope, the Portuguese plans to reach India were fulfilled when their navigator Vasco da Gama first set foot in the region, specifically in the city of Kozhikode. Upon reaching the Indian Ocean, the Portuguese took control of the trade network that had previously been established by Arab merchants, and began transporting various goods such as textiles, coffee, coconuts, and sugar from India to Europe (Arıkan & Demiryürek, 2018). Influenced by the wealth of the Venetian trade

network, the Portuguese extended their reach from the Mediterranean coasts to the southern shores of Africa and eventually to India. Soon after, they established ports in Goa (within India), the island of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, and the Malacca region in Malaysia. These strategic ports provided significant advantages to the Portuguese in controlling maritime trade between Europe and Asia. (Smith, 2005; Bolat and Ayaz, 2021)_However, the Portuguese presence in some parts of the Persian Gulf came to an end, as their expansion into the region was perceived as a threat by Muslim powers (Aryamanesh, 2024). Particularly in the Indian Ocean, the weakening of Portuguese naval power paved the way for Dutch and British fleets to take over. Meanwhile, Spain’s discovery of the Americas—while searching for alternative routes to reach the Indian Ocean—would go on to reshape the balance and dynamics of colonialism.

The primary motivation behind the rapid and aggressive colonization of the newly discovered continent by European powers was the same as their efforts in Africa: to gain control over valuable mineral resources. A second major outcome was that, as the exploitation of precious metals in the Americas intensified, colonial practices in Africa also shifted in both method and intensity. Following the discovery of the New World, Africa increasingly turned from a source of valuable minerals into an uncontrolled market for the transatlantic slave trade.

Until the end of 15th century, Spain was not a prominent power either economically or politically, and its naval expeditions to Africa and other regions had not been as successful or dominant as those of the Portuguese (Elik and Bal, 2014). Perhaps for this reason, the proposed expedition plan by Christopher Columbus—based on the idea that “if the eastern route is long, the western one must be shorter”—was rejected by the Portuguese but accepted by Spain under the rule of Ferdinand II and Isabella I (Smith, 2005; Aryamanesh, 2024).

As a result, the Genoese navigator who unknowingly reached the Bahamas initiated a series of explorations into the interior regions of the newly discovered continent, ultimately helping Spain gain an upper hand over Portugal (Bolat & Ayaz, 2021). Like Portugal, Spain’s initial goal before expanding into the Mediterranean was to repel Muslim forces, spread Christianity, and reach India.(Aryamanesh, 2024). Following the discovery of the Americas, it became clear that the Europeans’ actions, though framed in religious terms, were primarily driven by the pursuit of

resources. Their main goal was wealth and power, as under the conditions of the time, spreading their religion through long and costly wars was not realistically feasible. Columbus himself shared these religious values, and as he noted in his journal, his explorations as an admiral would make it possible to conquer non-believers' lands and bring victory to Christianity. (Flint, 2025) After reaching the Bahamas, Columbus arrived in St. Domingo and quickly realized that this land was nothing like the descriptions of China or India. There were neither cultivated lands nor organized communities—only impoverished, unclothed people living among vast forests. (Smith, 2005) In his journal, Columbus described the natives as “naked, as they were born,” with brown or reddish skin, sometimes painted with dyes. When he gave them gifts, they responded with small items such as cotton yarn, parrots, and spears. Columbus interpreted this as a sign of their friendliness, but also noted that their unfamiliarity with the items he offered and their way of life revealed their ignorance and poverty. (Kolomb, 2015) In his later notes, Columbus mentioned that he would take some of the local people back to Spain—both to present them to the King and Queen, and to teach them the language in order to convert them to Christianity. Up to this point, the actions toward the indigenous people may have appeared to be driven by a civilizing mission or religious motives, but the reality was different. Even if not for Columbus himself, the Treaty of Alcáçovas and later the Treaty of Tordesillas legitimized Portugal's territorial claims in Africa, securing its access to gold and the slave trade. This, in turn, fueled Spain's ambition to transform its presence in the Caribbean into a large-scale Atlantic slave trade, hoping to achieve similar economic gains. (Berquist Soule, 2017)

Upon learning of Spain's discovery of the New World, Portugal was displeased and considered it a violation of the Treaty of Alcáçovas (Elik and Bal, 2014). The Portuguese voiced their objections to the Pope, and through a series of papal decrees, the Americas were divided: the western part was granted to Spain while the eastern part was given to Portugal (Williams, 1944). In the following years, with further papal support, new agreements expanded this division beyond land to include the oceans, effectively partitioning global maritime domains between the two powers. By the peak of its expansion in 16th century, Portugal had claimed Brazil and the Amazon coastline in South America, as well as vast territories in Africa and Asia. Spain, on the other hand, initially established control in Central

America—particularly the Caribbean and Mexico—then expanded into South America, occupying Peru, Colombia, Chile, and Ecuador, and later moved northward to claim coastal and strategic regions such as California, Texas, and Florida. (Arikan and Demiryürek, 2018) From this point onward, Portugal and Spain fully launched their expansionist policies, aiming to seize complete control over the lands they reached and to legitimize this domination with the support of the Pope. Eventually, England, France, and the Netherlands opposed the Church's declaration—which granted Portugal and Spain full sovereignty over the newly acquired territories—and initiated their own colonial enterprises to claim their share (Williams, 1944). As was the case in the Canary Islands, labor shortages on Caribbean plantations—exacerbated by the mass killing of Indigenous peoples—led to the large-scale importation of enslaved Africans to the Americas. (Rodney, 2011) Based on their previous experience with the African slave trade, the discovery of the New World led to the establishment of a massive transatlantic slave trade. The ideology of race and conquest, rooted in religion and slavery, laid the foundations for future global power dynamics as in today's context (Berquist Soule, 2017). Although the balance of power and key actors would shift over time, large scale slave trading and land exploitation in Africa would continue in the same way.

2.2.2.2 The era of British, French and Dutch colonization in Africa

The colonial ventures of the British, French, and Dutch governments began later than those of Spain and Portugal. Their efforts to take part in the territories occupied and maritime trade routes dominated by these two major powers helped shape early modern colonialism and even the broader dynamics of the world system. During this period, colonies frequently changed hands among European states through major wars and various strategies. From Africa to Asia and the Americas, the colonial wars caused immense destruction and led to mass scale slave trading. Compared to other European powers, England entered the colonial race later and, learning from the experiences of others, initially resorted to unethical and simplistic methods—either by trying to take over occupied territories or through piracy, seizing the ships of rival nations. (Ferguson, 2017)

England's transition from an island nation to an imperial power was closely tied to its growing dominance at sea. Through the expeditions carried out by English

privateers, the island of Ternate—previously under Portuguese control in Indonesia—was captured, marking England’s first overseas possession (Bolat and Ayaz, 2021). The English government supported this process, benefiting from the plunder and conquests achieved through piracy. In contrast to England, the Dutch government took advantage of the experience and knowledge gained by Dutch merchants who had previously worked on behalf of Portugal—particularly in terms of maritime maps and exploration techniques. Drawing on this expertise, the Dutch launched their first maritime expeditions in late 16th century through a company established by wealthy merchants. (Göksoy, 2018) After rounding the Cape of Good Hope and reaching the East Indies, the Dutch established the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*), taking control over the large-scale trade of commodities such as spices and silk from Asia to Europe (Ferguson, 2017). Maintaining their economic success in the East Indies, the Dutch expanded their maritime trade network in the following years—extending from the Cape of Good Hope and the Persian Gulf to the East Indies and as far as Japan—thus forming a vast colonial empire based on maritime commerce (Göksoy, 2018). Meanwhile, the English, who initially supported privateers to achieve maritime power, later established commercial companies that grew strong enough to take over the trade of surrounding regions. Their rivalry with the Dutch began in the Baltic Sea through the Estland Company and continued with the establishment of the Levant Company, centered in Aleppo, which aimed to reach India via the Mediterranean route. (See, 2021) Following the discovery and growing popularity of the New World, the Netherlands—emerging as a rising European power—launched new expeditions to the region. In both North and South America, including the coasts of Brazil and the Caribbean, the Dutch captured several strategically important areas from the Portuguese and the Spanish (Göksoy, 2018). They began managing their colonial activities and the companies they had established in these territories through the Dutch East India Company. To supply labor for sugarcane and timber production in the Americas, they seized Portuguese slave trading hubs along the West African coast and utilized them as a workforce source. (Göksoy, 2018) However, the Dutch were ultimately unable to retain the territories they had taken from the Spanish and Portuguese, who maintained strong influence in the Americas, and they eventually returned their holdings in South America and the West African slave trade centers. Nevertheless, for a significant period, the Netherlands was able to position itself as

the most powerful state in Europe due to its effective centralized fiscal policies and dominance at sea, despite threats from the British and the French. The Dutch navy, at its peak, was powerful enough to send five times as many ships to Asia as the Portuguese and twice as many as the British (Ferguson, 2017). Meanwhile, the British effort to enter the spice trade led them to India, where they established the English East India Company. The British East India Company, unlike the Dutch version, eventually began to operate its activities like an autonomous state (Özcan, 2018). Britain's rise in maritime trade and colonial expansion inevitably led to conflicts with the Dutch. Competition in India, the intensification of British expansionism, and profits gained from the slave trade—which allowed the British to establish permanent colonies in Africa—drew not only the Dutch but also the French into conflict. Initially in Asia and later in the Americas, the British gradually became a growing threat, and through their military superiority in the ensuing wars, they pushed back the Dutch. (Göksoy, 2018) In 17th century, the British launched three wars against the Dutch. Although they did not achieve immediate success from these wars, they managed to significantly expand their fleet within a decade. (Ferguson, 2017) Despite France becoming an important power in the region, the British managed to seize Malacca, Singapore, and Penang in Asia; Maryland, New England, Virginia, and the Plymouth colonies in North America; and James Island, Sierra Leone, and the Cape of Good Hope in Africa, thereby expanding their presence through settler colonies. (Özcan, 2018) At that time, although France's primary objective was to expand eastward, it was captivated by the allure of the New World and launched expeditions to the coasts of North America, Guinea, Canada, and Brazil. (See, 2021) Dominating the Mediterranean as well, the French, like other European powers, conducted their colonial and maritime trade activities in a systematic manner. To manage these, they established major trade companies in the second half of 17th century, including the *Compagnies des Indes Orientales*, *Compagnies des Indes Occidentales*, and *Compagnies du Nord*. (Kavas, 2018) Among these, the French East India Company (*Compagnie des Indes Orientales*) posed a significant threat to the British due to its geographical proximity to British trading posts. This tension foreshadowed the global conflicts that would later arise between the two powers. (Ferguson, 2017) From this point on, France and Britain emerged as the two main rival powers of continental Europe. (Armaoğlu, 1997) Both nations focused on securing their colonies. France, being a part of the colonial race

later, had to protect its territorial gains from British encroachment. However, in the Seven Years' War, France was decisively defeated by Britain. During this period, France had 47 warships, whereas Britain had 111. (Dull, 2005) With the Treaty of Paris in 1763, Britain gained control over significant regions in North America such as New England, Mississippi, and Florida (Elik and Bal, 2014). However, British dominance in America would last only until the War of Independence, after which the focus shifted towards the more strategically important Far East. (See, 2021) By recognizing American independence with the Treaty of Paris in 1782, Britain sought to consolidate its strategic position, eliminating the Dutch, while France gained little of significance from this peace agreement. (Armaoğlu, 1997) The next significant leap for Europeans came with the development of modern industrial capitalism. With overseas trade and colonial expansion, European powers opened themselves entirely to foreign trade and eagerly sought access to new markets and colonial goods. The mercantilist system would now give way to industrial capitalism, where capital accumulation became the core priority. In this context, the main reason for European states' increasing focus on colonies was clearly the pursuit of cheap labor, raw materials, and a broader range of products. During its new golden age, Britain broke away from its previous administrative practices and established a new "colonial system," managing and reshaping its colonies according to its own needs. (Özcan, 2018) While in mid-nineteenth century, Britain maintained its presence in West Africa mainly for the purposes of slavery in regions such as Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast (Ghana), Lagos, and Gambia, by the end of the century it had transformed the control of nearly ten thousand tribes into dependent state structures tied to itself (Ferguson, 2017). Like all other European powers, for Britain too, the African continent symbolized a vast resource, new territories, and a gateway to trade. Moreover, establishing hegemony over Africans was considered relatively easy. From their perspective, the local populations were seen as uncivilized and racially inferior. The British, in particular, had a strong sense of racial superiority, believing that the more land they controlled, the more people they could "civilize." Using this justification, they drew an imperial roadmap from Cape Town to Cairo, constructing a new strategic vision. (Ferguson, 2017) Meanwhile, other actors eager to exploit the African continent began expeditions into its interior regions. In this context, a Scottish missionary advanced eastward and reached Lake Tanganyika in the Congo region, eventually discovering the Nile River. (Armaoğlu, 1997) He documented and

published his findings about this vast freshwater source, thereby introducing the region to Europeans. As European powers began expanding into the African continent, a competitive race among them became inevitable. Rather than merely aiming to expand their territories, they were primarily focused on preventing rival states from accessing and annexing these rich lands. The gradual decline of the Ottoman Empire and its inability to maintain a presence in Africa further enabled European powers to invade and divide the continent among themselves without significant resistance. (Kavas, 2018) In the second half of the nineteenth century, European presence on the African continent began to intensify, initiating a colonial race known as the “Scramble for Africa.” (Şahin, 2018) Relying on an alliance between Portugal and Britain, the British acquisition of the Congo provoked reactions from Belgium, Germany, and France, who refused to recognize this claim. (Armaoğlu, 1997) At this point, seeking to elevate Germany’s global standing and assert its influence in the new era, the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck—representing a newly rising power—called for an international conference in Berlin in 1884, after securing colonial possessions in regions such as Cameroon, Togo, Namibia, and parts of Tanganyika. (Ferguson, 2017) With its rapidly growing industrial base, Germany aimed to benefit from Africa’s colonial wealth and establish a firm presence on the continent. To this end, it assumed a mediating role and organized the Berlin Conference (*Berliner Konferenz*) together with Europe’s leading powers. (Şahin, 2018) One of the key provisions of the agreement—comprising 37 articles—regarding the partition of Africa was the principle of “effective occupation”. According to this principle, states could not claim rights over territories merely through established outposts or facilities and in any case of occupation, other European powers were to be notified. (Armaoğlu, 1997) Although the stated aim of the Berlin Conference was to promote free trade across Africa, what this clause effectively implied was that the occupation of African territories would be legitimized under certain conditions and could be recognized by other powers. In essence, it was a formalization of the freedom to conquer. (Ferguson, 2017) Another significant provision of the agreement was the official abolition of slavery. However, slavery was not truly abolished; on the contrary, it increased in practice. A labor system based on colonial exploitation continued under the guise of agricultural production and related sectors. (Eckert, 2009) As a result of the conference, the dispute over the Congo was resolved by granting it to Belgium as an independent

state, while Germany seized control of Cameroon and Togo, thereby establishing its colony in what would become known as German East Africa. (Armaoğlu, 1997) Following the Berlin Conference, the colonial race on the African continent intensified. Regional conflicts driven by this scramble for colonies would become one of the underlying causes of the First World War. As the war approached, the British aimed to extend their reach to the Persian Gulf in order to secure access to new natural resources and assert dominance over the route to India. The French, on the other hand, pursued ambitions stretching from North Africa along the Mediterranean coast to Syria. In line with these imperial objectives, while the rivalry between Britain and France continued across Africa, they also began dividing the Levant and Mesopotamian regions among themselves. (Sezer, 2023) After the Berlin Conference, colonial activities on the African continent turned into a period of intense territorial rivalry and violent conflict, particularly between Britain and France. Advancing toward North Africa, Britain aimed to dominate the entire continent as originally planned. Following the occupation of Egypt in 1882, the British sought to move further along the Nile River, and subsequently occupied Sudan, establishing an Anglo-Egyptian condominium rule there in 1896. (Kavas, 2018) Meanwhile, the French, who already controlled Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco in the north, had long aspired to seize Egypt—an ambition dating back to Napoleon Bonaparte’s campaign. The opening of the Suez Canal further strengthened this desire, bringing France into fierce competition with Britain over Egypt. (Armaoğlu, 1997) As a result of the agreement reached with France at the end of the struggle, Britain emerged as the more successful party. By 1914, just before the outbreak of the First World War, almost the entire African continent—except for Liberia and Ethiopia—had been occupied by European powers. (Ferguson, 2017) Following the Berlin Conference, the colonial plundering of the entire continent was completed within just thirty years. Britain led the scramble, possessing the most strategically important regions and the largest land area, followed by France in second place. In addition to these two, the earliest colonial powers, Portugal and Spain, had acquired several coastal territories in various parts of the continent. Later entrants such as Germany, Italy, and Belgium also secured a significant share of African territories.

2.2.2.3 Slavery and slave trade in Africa

According to Article 1 of the Slavery Convention, prepared and signed by the League of Nations on 9 March 1927, slavery is defined as “*the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised.*” (League of Nations, 1926). It is an undeniable fact that the individuals or states who directly formulated this definition had already engaged in the Atlantic slave trade since 16th century. In the same article, slave trade is described as “*all acts involved in the capture, acquisition or disposal of a person with the intent to reduce them to slavery; all acts involved in the acquisition of a slave with a view to selling or exchanging them.*” Unfortunately, long before the legal prohibition of slavery and slave trade came into effect, modern slavery was already confirmed. The fact that individuals and groups who considered themselves “*civilized*” committed crimes against humanity on such a massive scale has led to endless consequences. Following the discovery of the American continent, slavery initially began with the forced labor of Indigenous peoples by Europeans. Over time, the growing colonial activities in the region caused a lack of laborers, which pushed colonial powers to turn toward the African continent, where the population was denser. For nearly four hundred years, around 20 million Africans were forcibly removed from their homelands and transported to plantations. (Kavas, 2018). In the history of colonialism, the discovery of the Americas and the age-long colonial practices played a significant role in the expansion of the transatlantic slave trade.

The transatlantic slave trade was first initiated by the Spanish. (Arikan and Demiryürek, 2018). Following Spain, other European powers also engaged in the slave trade. While Spain and Portugal were the early colonial powers, it was the entry of the Dutch, British, and French into the New World that escalated slavery and the slave trade to a new level. Due to their limited population, Europeans found slavery to be a more advantageous and profitable alternative, and their first destination became Africa. (Williams, 1944) Thus, alongside the profits generated from slavery, the plantations where market goods were produced also expanded. (Osterhammel and Jansen, 2023) From this point onward, the process would continue with Europeans striving to maintain stable profit margins and defend their colonial territories. This was because the profits derived from slavery and colonization had reached enormous proportions.

A triangular trade system was established between Europe, the Americas, and Africa. (Ferguson, 2017) Slaves were exported from Africa to the Americas to work, while agricultural products such as sugar, tobacco, and cotton produced in the Americas were transported to Europe. Undoubtedly, the victims of the mercantilist system were the enslaved people. Beyond its political and economic profits, the transatlantic slave trade represents a deep and undeniable global crime against humanity.

Columbus may have perceived the indigenous peoples he encountered in the New World as uncivilized and ignorant. However, these people were neither foolish nor incapable; they were simply less developed compared to other societies. Aware of this, the Spanish and Portuguese needed to justify slavery morally and found ways to ease their conscience. By involving the Church, they declared a holy war against non-believers and legitimized slavery under the guise of a Christian mission to convert them. This war was rooted in the belief in holy wars; the indigenous peoples of many conquered lands were labeled as infidels and were forced to convert to Christianity. (Berquist Soule, 2017) For them, there was no crime against humanity, and they felt no guilt, as they believed they were acting in accordance with their faith. However, a few centuries later, the very same states that had dominated the slave trade would begin advocating for its abolition. The story of John Newton, a former British slave trader and ship captain who later became a clergyman and hymn writer, reflects a recognition of the sins they had committed. (Ferguson, 2017) Furthermore, in an attempt to ease their consciences or portray themselves as not entirely ruthless, Europeans later claimed that it was actually African leaders who sold slaves to them from coastal slave camps. (Rodney, 2012) However, white Europeans were already categorizing indigenous peoples based on their skin color and physical features, contributing to a form of racism rooted in slavery. Throughout the history of slavery, it is well known how brutal, merciless, and vindictive the treatment of enslaved people was. The pressure and violence directed at native workers and slaves were not solely for extracting labor; from the very beginning of colonial activities, a policy of assimilation was pursued in the occupied territories. Europeans aimed to spread their own religion and culture, and as a result, bishoprics were established in many regions. (Arikan and Demiryürek, 2018) Especially towards the end of the 18th century, missionary societies were established in many

regions, taking on the task of 'spreading the Gospel to the infidels'. British missionaries were sent from Africa to the most distant colonial territories. (Ferguson, 2017) In Africa, more than one hundred thousand students were enrolled in Catholic and Protestant schools that had been opened. (Kavas, 2018)

For the British and the French, who were in constant competition with each other, the extent of violence inflicted upon slaves and some substantial commodities like sugar and tobacco in the plantations in Africa, India, and the Mississippi were one of the significant issues of 18th century. (Williams, 1944) As precious metals lost their dominance, agriculture and the slave trade became the focus, leading Europeans to reorganize their plans and trade routes accordingly. After the English Royal African Company, which held a monopoly on the slave trade, lost its royal authority due to revolutions and consequently its exclusive rights, the British gained full access to free trade. With the expanding of sugar plantations, the need for more slave to employ made slavery the largest export factor. (Williams, 1944) Beyond the mines and agricultural regions monopolized by European trading companies along the African coasts, Africans were also forcibly taken for other occupied territories to be used as laborers. Following the mass killing of Indigenous peoples in the Americas, there were not enough workers to sustain mining and agricultural production, which led to the continued and systematic use of African slave labor. This uncontrolled slave trade severely disrupted the demographic structure of Africa. Young and able-bodied indigenous peoples were taken from their homelands and forced to work for the benefit of the white man (Bulhan, 2015). For this reason, African states were unable to gain either economic or political strength and could not recover itself until the modern era. In order for Europeans to establish direct control over Africa, military power was initially essential, while the slave trade and forced labor of the local population were part of a strategic plan (Ocheni and Nwankwo, 2012). In this way, their presence in the region could be sustained in the long term — and indeed, that is exactly what happened.

In conclusion, Europe's later industrial position was fundamentally built on a capitalist system sustained by slavery. It can even be argued that all the wealth and power Europe possessed stemmed from this foundation. The sense of superiority that slavery instilled in white Europeans promoted a worldview of 'Europeans and the others' in their relations with all other nations. They also completed much of their

technological and scientific advancement through the exploitation of the colonies. Once they had gained significant industrial capacity, slavery was no longer necessary. However, their sense of superiority, racism, and economic greed continued.



3. INDUSTRIALIZATION AND THE EUROPEAN GREAT POWERS

Unlike other economic revolutions, the Industrial Revolution did not occur suddenly but rather developed gradually, making it a unique event in history. It was a result of evolving economic methods and an ever-developing economic system. The reasons for its emergence in Europe are widely recognized as stemming from the interdependent economic relationships between states that had existed since 16th century. The most significant of these interdependencies was formed through colonies, while the rest was based on trade networks and economic ties with other dominant or economically advanced states. (Hobsbawn, 2018) The emergence of the Industrial Revolution was largely influenced by dependent economies that paved the way for social and technological developments. However, the rapid growth of industrialization and its widespread impact across Europe cannot be explained by a few basic factors alone. Industry is shaped by a set of dynamics rooted in the capitalist system, social structures, and technological advancements, all of which are interconnected with various other important elements. Chronologically, conditions such as an agriculture-based economy, the rise of trade, expanding markets, international trade networks, the development of capitalism, population growth, the emergence of specific social classes, and advancements in technology all contributed to the realization of the Industrial Revolution, particularly in England. (Wood, 2002) Another important factor was the speed of economic development. (Hobsbawn, 2018) The transformation of the Industrial Revolution into a “revolution” and its global shift toward a capitalist system took only about a century. Although this might seem like a long time by today's technological standards, it was a remarkably rapid process for 18th century. Once industrialization gained momentum, it spread across European countries and even reached the newly independent United States. As a result of this expansion, trade and shared economic policies among the Great Powers became integral parts of this emerging system. Each state sustained the economic model through the resources obtained from its own territories, colonies, and overseas trade networks.

3.1 Britain

The main conditions that distinguished Britain from other European countries in the process of industrialization were its well-developed manufacturing sector and strong commercial relations. (Hobsbawm, 2018) In addition, Britain had rich coal and iron reserves during this period and had significantly advanced its banking and financial systems. Its success in financial capitalism can largely be attributed to the wealth it accumulated from maritime and colonial trade as early as the beginning of 18th century. (See, 2021) Another important factor was the country's ability to transform income from various sources into capital and use it effectively. This capital enabled the expansion of British agriculture and the cotton industry through the application of new technologies and machinery. Likewise, consistent investments in colonial and overseas trade, along with new political regulations, also contributed to this success. The commercial and colonial laws enacted just after the Age of Exploration was strategically important, designed to serve the interests of the country. For example, Britain implemented laws requiring all imports and exports from its colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Americas to be conducted exclusively by British ships. This effectively excluded other colonial powers from these regions. (See, 2021) Similarly, for a certain period, Britain enforced the use of only British-manufactured goods within its colonies, thereby creating markets exclusively for its own products. (Gençoğlu, 2020) Throughout this entire process, Britain's economic gains from its dominance in maritime and colonial trade were of great significance. The capital accumulated from expanding sea routes and overseas markets indirectly contributed to the development of urban areas. At the same time, the increase in cheap raw materials imported into the country accelerated mechanization and industrialization. Despite the availability of cheap resources and labor, the government provided various incentives to property owners to ensure smooth operations. By the end of 18th century, Adam Smith had published his influential work advocating the efficiency of the free market and the limitation of state intervention. The British economy soon adopted the *laissez-faire* doctrine, and property owners gained economic independence from the state. (Mohajan, 2019) With the adoption of a liberal economy, the state limited its own authority, granted private property rights, and opened the way for unlimited profit through a free market and free competition. As Smith argued, when political power dominates

economic affairs, it hinders national prosperity and wealth. (Smith, 2005) During the same period, based on similar conditions created by the new system, the British Parliament introduced the first legislative proposals related to agriculture, initiating a wave of privatization. (Küçükkalay, 1997). The privatization of agricultural land meant that land was concentrated in one hand and transformed into large-scale production areas. Farmers no longer cultivated their own land, but worked for others in exchange for money. The development of agriculture also meant the development of industry. Through various reforms and regulations, land productivity increased, leading to greater food production and creating a suitable environment for a growing population. As a result, migration from rural areas to cities intensified, causing rise to large industrial cities. Ultimately, the Industrial Revolution in England occurred thanks to the successful integration of agriculture and machinery within a capitalist system. (Wood, 2002) In addition, the colonies that supplied raw materials and sufficient labor force to the country were of great importance. When industrialization first began to emerge and before it turned into a revolution, wars over colonies continued across Europe. Like in industry, England also held dominance at sea and effectively capitalized on all its gains. The overseas markets it controlled, along with the cheap raw materials and labor obtained from the colonies, provided all the necessary resources and wealth for England to become the leading power on the continent. It is estimated that one-quarter of the resources used by England were obtained within its own borders, while the remaining three-quarters came from its colonies and international trade (Blanc, 1867).

3.1.1 The role of agriculture and textile industries

The first phase of industrialization can be described as the transformation of agriculture and textile production into large-scale operations. In particular, the growth of cotton textile exports accelerated this process (Hobsbawm, 2018). Before the Industrial Revolution, agricultural activities were carried out using traditional methods. Around 80% of the population lived in rural areas, while the remaining 20% lived in small towns that had not yet urbanized (Mohajan, 2019). By the late 18th century, only about one-third of the total population was engaged in agricultural work in rural areas (Hobsbawm, 2018). English agricultural activities were primarily focused on the consumer goods trade of them. Food products such as grain were traded from local markets to other parts of Europe. (Wood, 2022) Farmers not only

cultivated their land for personal use but also produced goods to sell to artisans. Agricultural products, especially those used for textile production, were collected from rural areas, processed, and sold to merchants. In the early 19th century, although cotton yarn production still took place in small workshops, advanced machinery was already being used in manufacturing facilities. (See, 2021)

Before the Industrial Revolution, the transition of textile production from hand operated roller machines to an industrialized weaving system paved the way toward industrialization. At this stage, human labor and effort were more prominent than machinery. What distinguished England from other countries was the long standing presence of the textile industry even before the revolution. In particular, in woolen textile production, farmers often owned both their looms and their farmland, and the textile industry was always closely tied to agriculture. (Küçük, 1980) Another key group in this process was the merchants. As industry expanded, these merchants gradually evolved into factory owners. They would purchase woven and dyed wool at low prices from former independent farmers who had become agricultural laborers, and sell it in growing markets. Over time, these markets expanded significantly, and the merchants transformed into industrial capitalists. (See, 2021) These markets stretched as far as the Mediterranean and the Levant, eventually creating economic competition with other European countries. (Küçük, 1980)

3.1.2 The impact of the colonial possessions

As Britain set out to explore the seas in search of new markets to sell its textiles, it also encountered a wide variety of new agricultural and natural products in the lands it reached. In pursuit of these markets, the country focused on shipbuilding and maritime trade, leading to the establishment of trading companies that supported seafaring merchants. (See, 2021) Although the mercantilist era emphasized the accumulation of gold and silver, Britain simultaneously expanded its range of agricultural products. As its textile industry grew to the point of requiring new markets, Britain began importing cotton from its colonies. In addition to valuable agricultural goods like pineapples, cocoa, maize, tobacco, bananas, and coffee, Britain also imported livestock such as cattle, pigs, and goats, boosting agricultural productivity. (Ferguson, 2017)

The precious metals obtained from the colonies also played a major role in the industrialization process. These resources contributed to an increase in financial capital, enabling the development of new industries. In other words, property owners and merchants of the time became rich enough to establish larger production facilities. These facilities had basis of low cost labor. The British economy was largely built on cheap labor provided from its colonies. Ferguson, 2017) A large number of workers were taken from their homelands and transported by ships to be employed both in the mainland and in the colonies. The use of cheap labor not only met the demand for workforce but also helped keep production costs low. This became one of the major driving forces of the Industrial Revolution for Britain. For this reason, developing capitalist states consistently sought to preserve and exploit cheap labor for the benefit of their own capital. (Wood, 2022)

Another significant impact of the colonies was their contribution to maritime trade and navigation through coastal ports. Thanks to its numerous ports located across different regions, Britain was able to maintain and expand its maritime trade with ease. As early as the beginning of 18th century, Britain's rapidly growing economy was sustained not primarily through manufacturing, but through the expansion of its overseas trade via water transport.(Inikori, 2004) Britain's small scale workshops enabled access to larger markets, where industry and commerce developed mutually as two interdependent and growing forces. As is well known, the first essential requirement for manufacturing was access to raw materials. Step by step, Britain acquired raw materials from its colonies, increased its production, distributed these goods across colonial markets, and was able to easily gain cheap labor for its expanding industrial sector.

3.1.3 Technology

As in Britain and all other industrializing countries, the increase in production naturally created a need for new means of production, which in turn led to technological advancements. What is particularly striking about this period is not only the impact of these developments, but also the remarkable speed at which they occurred. The main reason behind this rapid progress was the profitable market created by industrialization, which served as a strong incentive for technological innovation. (Acemoğlu and Robinson, 2013) In this context, there was a noticeable

increase in the number of craftsmen and skilled individuals in Britain who were engaged in developing new machines and tools. (Morgan, Ó Gráda, and Mokyr, 2020) Among these innovations, one of the most significant inventions of the Industrial Revolution was undoubtedly the steam engine. By improving upon earlier versions of the steam engine and making it more efficient, James Watt ensured its widespread use across industries in 1776. (Fernihough and O'Rourke, 2021) This machine, which was especially used in mining and transportation, accelerated industrial production and made it more practical. Compared to its earlier versions, the improved steam engine was more efficient, leading to its widespread use in coal mines, and it was less costly than older techniques. (Clark & Jacks, 2007) Coal became the primary fuel source, and Britain had abundant coal reserves. These low-cost new machines not only increased productivity and speed in manufacturing but also facilitated the growth and spread of factories. Thus, the expansion of industry was closely linked to the use of new machines, methods, and techniques. Additionally, in Britain—already equipped with a functioning banking system—investors' interest in these new machines paved the way for further investments. (Mohajan, 2019) A rapidly growing economy emerged in the country. In particular, the steam engine's role in increasing iron and steel production not only contributed to economic growth but also enabled advancements in society and transportation. The expansion of railways through iron production, along with the construction of new buildings and ports, marked a revolutionary period. (Mohajan, 2019) While the country's economy was advancing, opportunities expanded in parallel as well. This growth was primarily fueled by an industrial transformation powered by coal powered steam engines (Munro, 2002). New technologies and the investments in them began to shape every aspect of the country. More investments brought about more innovations, and this cycle continued steadily. In addition, the government introduced social reforms and regulations aimed at fostering innovation and supporting inventors. On one hand, scientific and technological institutes were established to provide education to the public by skilled and knowledgeable experts in relevant fields; on the other hand, the English patent system was implemented. (Mokyr, 2008) Such institutional measures also brought social and industrial order and discipline to the country. These small initiatives and innovations were among the key factors that pushed England to revolutionize industry and outpace its competitors. Ultimately, by the late 18th century, England had embraced new

technologies based on steam and iron power, distinguishing itself from other European nations and taking a leading role in the international economy. (Ferguson, 2017) With a well functioning heavy industry, ongoing technological inventions, and an expanding network of waterways and railways, Britain was set to revolutionize communication in the coming years with the invention of the telegraph. Initially invented by Francis Ronalds, this groundbreaking innovation made it possible to establish communication and facilitate supervision across both domestic and overseas commercial points. (Ferguson, 2017) Within a short period, this significant invention spread across Europe, inspiring the creation of various versions. Instant communication had become one of the most vital needs of the era. In the United States, Samuel F.B. Morse's development of the electric telegraph with its unique method of message transmission led to the emergence of the telegraph industry, resulting in the establishment of numerous companies. (McGillem, 2025) The invention of the telegraph held critical importance, particularly during industrialization, as distances were considerably vast. The ability to quickly resolve potential issues and disruptions helped reduce costs. Naturally, the benefits of the telegraph extended beyond industrial production and financial sectors like in military affairs and diplomacy.

3.2 France

France's late entry into industrialization and its recognition as the second industrial power after Britain can be attributed to several factors. This was not only about Britain's own efforts and capacity to take the lead, but also France's complex social and political issues facing during that period. However, prior to industrialization, during the dominance of the mercantilist system in Europe, France had a highly developed foreign trade network focused on agricultural and textile products—particularly in its trade relations with Spain and Britain. (See, 2021) In 17th century, the French textile industry became particularly concentrated in the Lyon region, being famous for its silk weaving. The success of the textile sector in Lyon and its surroundings were mostly on account of support and initiatives provided by King Louis XI. (See, 2021) During the following century, France emerged more prominently as the Netherlands fell behind.

In the field of technology, many kinds of machines for industry were developed by French engineers and inventors. It is even known that some notable British inventors achieved success by drawing inspiration from prominent figures such as Leonardo da Vinci, Jacques de Vaucanson, and François Senot, modeling their inventions on the systems and mechanisms developed by these pioneers. (Morgan, O Grada and Mokyr, 2020) On the other hand, coal mines and the iron and steel industry located in the northern region contributed to the increase in France's industrial capacity. However, even a major power like France had to follow the techniques and innovations of the rapidly growing British industry. One reason for this—besides France's financial and political struggles—was the inefficiency and low quality of its steel products, which caused to a steady dependence on imports from Britain. (Morgan, O Grada and Mokyr, 2020)

By the end of 17th century, during the height of colonial competition, France held a dominant position in Europe with economic and demographic superiority over Britain. (Ferguson, 2017) However, the colonial rivalry between Britain and France, along with civil wars, significantly weakened the country. In particular, France's defeat in the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) against Britain in North America resulted in the loss of vast territories—like Canada and India—and caused severe financial distress. Following this defeat, France attempted to retaliate by supporting the American War of Independence, contributing nearly 2 billion livres, which nearly emptied the national treasury. (Armaoğlu, 1997) Although the national economy was steadily deteriorating, the privileged lifestyle of the nobility and the clergy had reactions of public resentment, eventually triggering a wave of uprisings against the monarchy.

3.2.1 French revolution

As many sources indicate, the French Revolution was not a premeditated or organized event from the outset. When viewed from a broader perspective, the revolution emerged as a result of political and economic reasons. The inefficiency of the tax system and the king's uncontrolled extravagance—including his substantial financial support to the American Revolution—sparked a massive public unrest. (Giritli, 1989) The people were worn out by rising living costs and increasingly burdensome taxes. Moreover, the taxation system was far from being equitable

across social classes. The general income and wealth tax of the country, known as the *taille*, was largely exempted for the nobility, much of the clergy, and segments of the bourgeoisie, while it continued to be collected from peasants and laborers. (Ağdemir, 2017)

Ironically, although France was in better condition than England in many respects, the French people suffered far more heavily under taxation compared to the English. (Smith, 2005) Various proposals were introduced in the parliament to resolve the issues of taxation and the economic crisis. However, none of these suggestions were accepted, as they threatened the interests of the monarchy and the nobility. As a result, a separate assembly was formed to address the financial problems, consisting of representatives from the three social classes. This body, known as the *Estates-General* (États-Généraux), convened on May 5, 1789. (Armaoğlu, 1997) The Estates-General was composed of three estates representing all sectors of French society: the First Estate, made up of clergy members; the Second Estate, consisting of nobles including the royal family and high ranking officials; and the Third Estate, which represented the common people—peasants, workers, and the bourgeoisie. The Estates-General did not have legislative or executive powers; its primary function was to present the complaints and demands of the people to the king and attempt to find solutions through majority vote. (Kavık, 2024)

The formation of this body marked one of the most significant steps toward the French Revolution. However, when the Third Estate proposed reforms in favor of the common people, the nobility and clergy resisted and obstructed the voting process. As a result, the assembly was unable to reach any meaningful resolution. (Armaoğlu, 1997) Thereupon, realizing that they would not be able to reach any resolution that went against the interests of the king and the upper classes, the Third Estate declared itself the *National Assembly* and began drafting a constitution that would eventually lead to the Revolution (Kavık, 2024). Naturally, once the idea of a constitution emerged, it became necessary to define the principles on which it would be based (Kropotkin, 2009) During this period, public uprisings had already begun, and people, suffering from deep inequality and economic hardship, were ready to act in response to even the slightest negative developments. Within the National Assembly, the Third Estate began to organize independently, using their own means to oppose the monarchy and initiate voting procedures. One

of the leading figures of the Revolution, the clergyman and political thinker Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, proposed a motion, after which the National Assembly declared itself the *National Constituent Assembly*. Facing growing pressure, the clergy and nobility were ultimately forced to follow the developments and participate in the process. (Mark, 2023) Later, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* was published, marking the end of feudalism and laying the foundation for a society based on legal rights. Core principles such as equality and liberty were adopted as central themes of the revolutionary process. (Giritli, 1989) These principles—especially revolution and equality as fundamental human rights—first spread across Europe and eventually influenced the entire world. The transformative power of these values was largely driven by the works of leading intellectuals such as Hobbes, Rousseau, Voltaire, and Montesquieu, who criticized the existing unjust system. Ultimately, their influence encouraged the public to participate in political movements, leading to the widespread adoption of electoral representation and the formation of organized political groups. (Kropotkin, 2009) As the people became more aware, their courage grew, and they were determined to continue their struggle until they gained all of their rights. This process, as widely known, was part of the Enlightenment era—a period that stretched from the Renaissance to the Revolution. One of the most significant outcomes of this transformation for society was the disruption of traditional class structures and a profound shift in class relations..

Alongside this, the Constituent Assembly introduced a series of new laws aimed at weakening the power and authority of the other social classes. For instance, the Church's valuable properties were confiscated, and clergy were downgraded to the status of state employees. Additionally, reforms were made in the army and judiciary to prevent excessive centralization of power (Kropotkin, 2009). Up to this point, a brittle constitutional monarchy had been established, in which legislative and executive powers were shared with the King. However, the King and Queen's attempt to flee the palace and seek refuge with the Northern army, due to increasing pressure, completely destroyed public trust. Their capture and eventual execution followed. (Armaoğlu, 1997) The Constituent Assembly then officially removed royal authority and assumed full control of the government (Kavık, 2024) However, divisions began to emerge within the Assembly, forming right and left wing factions—namely the Feuillants and the Jacobins. From within the left-wing group, a

more radical, pro-war faction emerged, aiming to preserve the ideals of the revolution. (Mark, 2023) In pursuit of this ideal, the left wing liquidated all domestic opposition, ushering in what became known as the Reign of Terror.

The overthrow of the monarchy and the transition to a constitutional regime in France caused considerable anxiety across Europe, as this was an unprecedented event. In response, the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Austria—who was also King Louis XVI's brother in law—joined forces and declared war on France in an attempt to crush the revolution. However, the French people responded en masse, volunteering for military service, and ultimately achieved victory. (Armaoğlu, 1997) Following this major French victory, the Assembly officially proclaimed the Republic on September 21, 1792. (Mark, 2023) At that point, King Louis XVI, who had been imprisoned and kept alive until then, was brought before the newly formed Convention—an assembly elected by the people. One of its first decisions was the execution of the King. His death further intensified concerns across Europe, prompting Britain and other European powers to coalize against France. (Mark, 2023) This situation eventually led to war between France and other European powers. In particular, Britain, disturbed by France's military victories and territorial expansions, managed to push France back with the support of the coalition forces. However, the outcome would have turned in France's favor. After signing peace treaties with the coalition powers, France achieved a significant victory over the Netherlands and subsequently incorporated it into its own alliance. (Armaoğlu, 1997)

While France was engaged in external warfare, it was also facing internal unrest and uprisings due to instability in the government. During this time, Napoleon began to gain prominence with his military successes. As a result, the Convention was dissolved and replaced by a five member Directory. After returning from his Egyptian campaign, Napoleon took part in the Consulate regime for four years and was eventually declared himself Emperor in 1804. (Kavık, 2024) The Revolution did not come to an end under Napoleon's rule, yet the revolutionaries claimed that it declined with the empire. Although the republican ideals of the revolution were not fully realized, Napoleon implemented significant reforms in the areas of military, economy, law, and education. These reforms would affect many other European countries, too. Among the most important of these was the *Code Civil*, which was drafted and enacted by Napoleon in 1804. This legal code became the foundation of

French civil law. One of its most notable features was the provision allowing peasants to reclaim property without compensation—an action that enabled them to join the bourgeois class.(Kopsidis and Bromley, 2014)

The new reforms naturally brought positive outcomes in both agriculture and industry. In particular, peasants who had gained land worked diligently, resulting in increased harvests in the post revolutionary period (Kropotkin, 2009). At the same time, industrial entrepreneurs expanded the number of plants and factories across the country (See, 2021). Following the revolution, the capitalist economic system continued to function, supported by private property rights and the principles of a free market. Industry began to spread and develop as state control was reduced. Nevertheless, despite its potential, France lagged behind in economic growth and industrialization, continuing to follow and imitate Britain's lead. Although the French Revolution did not initially aim for industrial goals, the reforms and the rise of the middle class played a significant role in shaping industrialization in Western Europe—despite coming later than in Britain (Stearns, 2018).

Ultimately, as feudalism came to an end, labor force growth—driven by the liberalization of markets—helped develop the industrial sector. However, the revolution and the heavy losses incurred during the Napoleonic Wars slowed down France's progress. As a result, the country could not focus on trade and industrial expansion as effectively as Britain did.

3.2.2 The state of French industry in the second half of 19th century

Until the revolution before which no radical transformations had occurred, France was known to be the leading country in terms of both population and wealth. However, when domestic unrest emerged and the country suffered major losses, it struggled to recover and lost valuable time. Unfortunately, France's period of transformation coincided with the Industrial Revolution and the intensifying colonial race, during which global powers were rapidly shifting and competing. Although the revolution brought about significant legal and social progress, economic conditions deteriorated sharply in its aftermath: urban areas became impoverished, transportation remained inadequate, trade activity was minimal, and there was a shortage of skilled labor for industrial development (See, 2021). Due to these negative factors, France's economic strength weakened, and its path to

industrialization lagged behind that of other nations. (Stearns, 2018) However, agricultural production in France remained strong, and the pace and productivity of agriculture played a key role in industrial transformation. In particular, Napoleon's *Code Civil*, through its system of land tenure, empowered peasants to bear much of the burden of industrialization and helped accelerate the process (Heywood, 1981). Even before the revolution, France had a relatively advanced agricultural sector. Nevertheless, one of the main reasons it lagged behind Britain was the ancien régime's strict regulation of agricultural labor, industrial activity, and commercial enterprise in favor of elite interests (Kaymak, 2011). Additionally, France's continued reliance on traditional production methods and its primary focus on agriculture delayed progress in industrial sectors. These traditional methods mainly consisted of small scale industries and handicraft based production. As capitalism increasingly took hold in France, these older production systems gradually adapted to the new model and transitioned toward factory based production. (Aminzade, 1984) Until mid-nineteenth century, the continued reliance on domestic production and household tools—particularly in the textile sector, as well as in the production of metal tools, wood products, construction materials, and leather goods—left French industry far behind the mechanized systems and manufactured goods emerging in Britain and Germany. (Heywood, 1981)

In conclusion, the political instability that France experienced throughout this period significantly hindered its ability to focus on the transformation across the continent. The French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and the subsequent military conflicts after Napoleon resulted in substantial resource losses, making it difficult for the country to develop its industrial infrastructure. France's prolonged commercial rivalry with Britain also led to a series of misguided policies, most notably the Continental System. In retaliation for Britain's trade embargoes, France imposed similar trade restrictions not only on Britain but also on its allies and even neutral countries and forced its own allies to comply as well (Sloane, 1898). Although Britain's dominance in trade was undeniable, these embargoes posed at least some disruption to British exports and raw material imports.

However, the more critical issue was that Napoleon, despite France's lack of domestic industrial capacity, blocked the import of raw materials vital to its own producers (Sloane, 1898). During the industrialization of Europe, France failed to

focus on production, technology, and industrial transformation to the same extent as Britain. As a result, the systems and techniques it employed remained outdated and traditional, leaving the country behind in the industrial race.

3.3 Germany

In contrast to the French model, Germany followed an almost opposite path during its industrialization process. Despite joining the industrial race later, it quickly emerged as one of the most powerful industrial nations. By the time of the First World War, Germany had become Britain's main rival and greatest threat. At this point, while Britain had a population of approximately 31 million, Germany's population had reached 39 million. Furthermore, Germany had surpassed Britain in global manufacturing output, contributing 15% compared to Britain's 14% (Ferguson, 2017).

According to Sheilagh Ogilvie, full-scale mechanical industrialization in Germany did not take place until mid-nineteenth century. However, as early as 18th century, many workers were already producing goods using traditional methods—both at home and in workshops—and exporting them to industrial regions.(Ogilvie,1996) Germany's integration into European industrialization was delayed by nearly half a century. The primary reason for this delay, as in the case of France, was a result of complex political developments. The Holy Roman Empire had a fragmented structure composed of numerous independent states. After Napoleon declared himself Emperor, he united the southern and western German states under French influence and formed the Confederation of the Rhine (Rheinbund), effectively bringing an end to the Holy Roman Empire (Armaoğlu, 1997).

Since the emergence of nation states, the aspiration for a unified Germany had existed across these territories. However, the rivalry between Prussia and Austria—both of which remained outside the Confederation—consistently hindered any attempt to establish such unity. Following the Napoleonic Wars, the Congress of Vienna restructured the German states into a new entity known as the German Confederation (*Deutscher Bund*). Comprising nearly forty states, this confederation lacked centralized authority and each state continued to operate independently. Like many other European countries, Germany was also influenced by the French

Revolution. However, rather than being swept up by the wave of liberalism, the Revolution mainly triggered a sense of national unity among the German people. In this regard, Prussia played a key role by supporting the formation of a significant union, which had a profound impact on the region's commercial activities (Armaoğlu, 1997). Although Prussia's support carried political motivations aimed to counter Austria and other European powers, it nonetheless contributed substantially to Germany's commercial and industrial development (Veblen, 1990).

Even before 1800, Germany had established several industrial zones and mining areas, primarily focused on iron and steel production. Over time, some regions evolved into major centers of iron and steel manufacturing. As evidence of this, by the 1500s, the Holy Roman Empire was already producing half of Europe's total iron output (Ogilvie, 1996).

Germany's industrial and commercial development truly began after the Napoleonic era. Its greatest advantage was that, although it started later, it was able to benefit directly from existing British technologies and methods. By doing so, Germany bypassed much of the cultural and structural difficulties experienced by earlier industrializers and adapted to the process rapidly and efficiently (Marx, 1996).

3.3.1 Zollverein (The German Customs Union)

Until just twenty years earlier, the Congress of Vienna had redrawn the borders of Europe and restored the major powers—yet Germany was notably absent from this renewed order. The German states found themselves caught in a hegemonic rivalry between Prussia and Austria. The key turning point that would ignite economic activity and lay the groundwork for German unification was the creation of the Zollverein. Although earlier efforts to establish such a union had already been initiated by Prussia. As early as 1820, Prussia signed customs treaties with southern German states such as Bavaria, Hesse-Darmstadt, and Baden. (Bonde, 2023) Over time, the network expanded as more regions joined. With the inclusion of Saxony, the Zollverein was officially established in January 1834. (Armaoğlu, 1997) With the customs union, a unified tariff system was established, allowing goods to be freely imported and exported among the German states. This significantly accelerated trade and industrialization. Although the Zollverein was primarily founded with economic goals in mind, the need to create and regulate new policies also fostered political

coordination. The increasing cooperation across various sectors began to foster a sense of unity on a societal level as well. The Zollverein's most profound impact was its ability to bring together previously fragmented states under a shared economic framework, enabling them to present a unified front to the outside world. This cohesion not only strengthened internal ties but also altered the balance of power across Europe (Rayner, 2020).

Another significant impact was the technological advancement that propelled Germany forward in transportation and mechanization. By the 1850s, Germany had begun producing its own trains and other transportation vehicles, with the expansion of railway and track systems. Prior to this, new banking systems had been developed specifically to invest in industry and railroads. As a result, both foreign trade and production had doubled within a decade. (Menek, 2023)

The rise in transportation infrastructure led to parallel increases in population and urbanization. During the first major phase of railway expansion, lines were extended to smaller, non-industrialized areas beyond major urban centers, promoting economic development in these regions as well. (Braun & Franke, 2022) These critical developments and shared experiences laid the groundwork for a natural integration of the German people under a unified identity. This outcome had long been a goal of Prussia. Although the Zollverein had already accomplished a key part of this unification economically, Austria continued to oppose the formation of a German national state. (Armaoğlu, 1997) Despite Austria's resistance, the German people had already tasted a sense of unity, and Prussia was now in a strong position to lead. With the coronation of Kaiser Wilhelm I, Prussia ultimately achieved unification a decade later, giving rise to the German Empire under the leadership of Otto von Bismarck as Chancellor (Menek, 2023).

3.3.2 German unification and role of Bismarck

The unification of Germany completely changed the political and economic balance in Europe. This was a critical moment, especially during a time of industrialization and economic transformation. Germany quickly moved from a fragmented state to a unified country and gained economic power in a short time. After unification, Germany would soon become an industrial giant.

Germany's fate changed completely with the Zollverein, the first step toward its economic power. However, the country was still not unified and was governed in a fragmented way under the Vienna system. Even though there was an economic union, the lack of national unity meant that Germany couldn't fully use its potential. At this point, Otto von Bismarck, who had previously held various government positions and worked for the best interests of his country, stepped in. From the beginning, he wanted to establish a united Germany. To achieve this goal, he used political strategies to win the support of France and Russia, and successfully sidelined Austria (Armaoğlu, 1997). Bismarck realized that he could only achieve his plans for Germany through military power, and he famously declared that it could only be done through "blood and iron." (Vaibhav, 2017) As a result of a series of wars, the unification of Germany happened through the method Bismarck had described. In fact, the idea of German unification was first introduced in 1819 by the German economist Friedrich List (Öztürk, 2023). According to List, economic interests should be considered not individually, but nationally. He believed domestic trade should be free, while tariffs should still apply to foreign trade (Balkır, 2010).

These economic policies were carefully designed to support regions that had not yet fully industrialized, aiming to create a strong national industrial power. Bismarck, who embraced and carried out this ideal, followed his political strategies with great care. While he aimed to form a union under Prussia, he didn't want Austria to interfere and ruin his plans. Austria, on the other hand, wanted to weaken Prussia's dominance by renewing the customs union and including itself and other northwestern German states. However, Prussia blocked this attempt.(Öztürk, 2023) During this period, Bismarck was already making his plans to dissolve the confederation and establish a national unity under Prussian leadership known to other European powers. Nationalism was becoming an increasingly strong sentiment among the German people. The first war that strengthened this feeling and moved Germany toward unification was the war against Denmark. When Denmark tried to pass a new law to annex two German regions the Schleswig and Holstein, Bismarck saw this as an opportunity and initiated a war (Vaibhav, 2017). In 1864, Prussia and Austria defeated Denmark. However, disagreements over how to govern the conquered regions led to rising tensions between Prussia and Austria, eventually resulting in war between them (Öztürk, 2023). For Prussia, this conflict was the

perfect chance to completely eliminate Austria from German affairs. However, declaring war was risky for Bismarck, especially due to the uncertain positions of France and Italy. To manage this, he first secured a neutrality agreement with France, and then formed an alliance with Italy, agreeing to act together against Austria.(Armaoğlu, 1997) After Prussia's major victory in the war, Bismarck dissolved the German Confederation and established the North German Confederation, completely removing Austria from German affairs. At this point, Germany had become much stronger, and there was only one obstacle left to forming a complete national unity: France.

Bismarck now aimed to include the South German states—still under French influence—into the new union, uniting all German speaking regions (Vaibhav, 2017). France, which had remained neutral during the war against Austria, now found itself in an unexpected situation. As Germany moved toward unification, France risked falling behind as a European power and potentially losing its territories to Germany. Although France tried to reach a diplomatic agreement, Bismarck rejected these efforts and provoked France into war. In 1870, war broke out between France and Prussia. With the full support of the German states, Prussia defeated France (Vaibhav, 2017). As a result, the Treaty of Frankfurt was signed, allowing Prussia to annex the South German territories and France's key industrial region (Öztürk, 2023). On January 18, 1871, while Paris was under siege, the Prussians proclaimed the German Empire at the Palace of Versailles, officially completing the unification of Germany.

3.3.3 German acquisition of colonies

Germany's rapid industrialization naturally increased its need for raw materials. However, for a country still undergoing deep social, economic, and political changes, expanding beyond Europe was considered risky. Still, a growing industrial sector required raw materials and access to new markets. Because of this, German merchants began pressuring Bismarck, who had previously avoided engaging in colonial activities (Armaoğlu, 1997).

In addition, after the empire was established, rising production costs, market stagnation, and falling profit margins led to growing concerns in Germany amid a global economic crisis (Smith, 1978). Germany's desire—although it is late—to join

the colonial race may also have stemmed from a need to be seen as equal to other powerful colonial empires. For a European country that had worked hard to gain strength, survival required power on par with its rivals. In 19th century, colonies were one of the biggest sources of wealth and global influence. Bismarck's complete shift in thinking can be seen in the Berlin Conference, which he organized to legitimize colonial activity in Africa. Through this conference, Germany officially entered the colonial scene and strengthened its political position among other powers. As a result, Germany began establishing colonies by taking control of Namibia, Cameroon, Togo, and Tanzania, forming its South-West Africa and East Africa colonies (Armaoğlu, 1997).

However, this move came with major challenges. Germany had just begun to stabilize its economy, and taking on the high costs of colonial expansion placed a heavy burden on the country. Bismarck, who should have prioritized internal issues, unexpectedly found himself in a difficult situation as colonial ambitions led to massive spending and poor results overseas (Smith, 1978).

4. CONSEQUENCES OF THE INDUSTRIALIZATION FOR AFRICA

It is clear that the Industrial Revolution had a global impact. Most countries saw it as an example or a guide and tried to turn it into an opportunity based on their own potential, adapting themselves to this new era. Historically, states have often influenced each other socially and culturally. In the economic sphere, although there have been innovations and progress within the limits of their time, no other event compares to the Industrial Revolution. This is because it was supported by major advancements in technology during the period it emerged. After European countries gained experience from it, many other nations also benefited—some more than others. However, there was one exception: Africa. It is the only region that did not benefit from the Industrial Revolution, nor was it positively influenced by it in any significant way (Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2013). On the contrary, one could say that the Industrial Revolution actually benefited from Africa. As a colonial region, Africa was heavily exploited for its physical, economic, and human resources. (Settles, 1996) Africa became the main source for all the resources needed by rapidly developing European industries. With industrialization came the demand for raw materials for factories, enough food to feed growing populations, a large labor force willing to work for low wages, and new markets to absorb the surplus production. All of these were largely supplied by the African continent (Ocheni and Nwankwo, 2012). Through this way, European countries increased their capital with massive profits.

However, exploiting Africa's natural and human resources was not enough for them. Although European powers often viewed African communities and leaders as "uncivilized," there were many forms of resistance against colonization and exploitation. Yet, these uprisings were usually small-scale and unorganized, allowing the Europeans to suppress them easily. In anticipation of stronger resistance in the future, colonial powers developed new strategies. To establish a lasting presence and continue their colonial activities, they began to change the social and cultural infrastructure. They adopted a so-called "civilizing mission" and aimed to spread

Christianity while reshaping local religious, cultural, and political systems. (Inaltekin, 2023)

This section of the study will examine the indirect effects and consequences of the Industrial Revolution on Africa. During this period—marked by intensified and increasingly brutal colonialism—the continent experienced the destruction of its foundational structures. This devastation prevented Africa from recovering even in the following centuries and contributed to its continued status as the least developed continent. These outcomes will be analyzed under relevant subheadings throughout the study.

4.1 Economic Impact

Undoubtedly, for a state to reach a certain level of status, its core elements must be able to align with global standards. Achieving this alignment requires a certain level of economic strength. A country that cannot build a strong economy with its own resources cannot develop or keep up with the times. One of the main reasons Africa has fallen behind the rest of the world today is its economic weakness. The root cause of this weakness lies in the colonial era and the slave trade that came with it (Settles, 1996). Unfortunately, while the world was undergoing a major economic transformation, Africa found itself both at the center of this change and yet excluded from its benefits—ultimately abandoned to its fate. However, history shows that before colonization, African states were already engaged in trade and were part of an international trading system (Settles, 1996). It is reasonable to assume that, under normal circumstances and within their own capacities, African countries could have eventually strengthened their economies and adapted to major transformations like the Industrial Revolution—just like other nations did. Compared to Europe, Africa had a larger population and an abundance of both natural and mineral resources, which could have propelled it forward with the right strategies and adaptations.

Especially during the height of the Industrial Revolution, in the last quarter of 19th century, the development of agricultural, mining, and industrial techniques in Africa, along with the expansion of railway networks, could have provided significant advantages in integrating into global trade (Heldring & Robinson, 2012). Furthermore, although African economies were previously based on barter systems,

colonial powers imposed their own currencies, reshaping local economic structures. (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012) When viewed through economic data, these developments in a rapidly evolving world could be considered positive—even for colonial states. Although the figures in the graphs may show an upward trend, it was only the colonial powers who truly benefited from this growth. The reason is clear: colonial powers maintained complete control over African economies and governance, allowing production only of agricultural and industrial goods that served European needs, while actively preventing further development (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012).

Additionally, railways were constructed solely to connect market areas and provide access to coastal ports; they were not built to link colonies with each other or to reach central regions (Settles, 1996). In short, while some form of development did occur, colonial rulers naturally prevented local populations from benefiting from these opportunities. As a result, Africa's potential to complete its own process of economic modernization was entirely taken away. (Acemoglu, Robinson, 2013)

One of the major factors that negatively affected Africa's economy was the slave trade. Walter Rodney clearly highlights this issue, arguing that the slave trade led to a significant decrease in population and increased internal violence, ultimately disrupting the social structure and preventing economic development (Rodney, 2012). It is indeed true that the slave trade caused a sharp decline in Africa's population. Mathematically, this made it impossible to maintain sufficient labor for agriculture and local production. At a time when Africa urgently needed labor and productive capacity more than land itself, the loss of a large portion of its healthy, young, and mostly male population to the Atlantic slave trade only worsened the situation (Rodney, 2012). The triangular slave trade between Africa, the Americas, and Europe provided cheap, even free, labor for many colonies. While this system severely damaged the African continent, it simultaneously fueled European industrialization and supported the growth of colonial powers.

One of the major consequences of the slave trade was the increase in internal conflicts across the African continent. Many African tribes became directly involved in the trade, capturing and selling other Africans to Europeans. This led to wars, abductions, and massacres, causing a significant rise in violence and social instability. (Rodney, 2012) Kingdoms and tribes, in exchange for money or goods,

captured fellow Africans and sold them to European traders. This internal division and lack of trust made it nearly impossible for local societies to unite and build collective strength, significantly hindering Africa's long term development.

In particular, violent conflicts driven by the slave trade destroyed existing institutions and completely eliminated the possibility of forming centralized systems. (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013) Thus, the benefits of the slave trade were not limited to colonial powers: some local tribes profited as well. However, rather than investing in production or alternative forms of commerce, these groups followed a path that led to long term devastation. This is one of the key reasons for the intensification of civil wars, especially in southern and western Africa. Even during the decolonization process, regions failed to develop positive cooperation; instead, continued conflicts further obstructed economic recovery. (Wallerstein, 2020)

In order for an economic recovery to take place, it is first necessary to establish reasonable and solid foundations for the political and social structural elements to rely upon. Naturally, neighboring regions and external natural factors also influence these elements. To assess this, it is useful to examine Africa's post-colonial GDP, population, and foreign trade ratios in a straightforward manner (Wallerstein, 2020). When evaluating population data, particular attention should be paid to the loss of the youth population, which constituted a significant portion of the total, and the fact that this loss occurred during the Industrial Revolution. As previously stated, Africa was not only unable to benefit from its existing population during the industrialization process, but it also lacked the necessary population structure for economic development in the aftermath.

In terms of foreign trade, the profits generated from import and export activities were entirely channeled to the colonial powers, leaving Africa with virtually no economic gain. As a result, even a century later, GDP per capita in many African countries—particularly in sub-Saharan Africa—remained below 1%, and in some cases, income levels were even lower than during the colonial period (Landes, 1999).

Following the intense colonial exploitation they experienced, the countries of the continent had long ceased to be self-sufficient. The independence they achieved through great effort ultimately left them in a deep economic vacuum. Consequently,

in order to fill this void and establish basic infrastructure, they were often compelled to cooperate with the very colonial powers they had struggled to free themselves from (Nkrumah, 2023).

4.2 Political Impact

With the Berlin Conference, the artificial borders drawn across Africa effectively rendered the authority of existing kingdoms and dynasties void. The primary aim of the Europeans was to fully occupy every region of the continent. From the outset, this involved violent conquest. Economic exploitation alone was insufficient for the Europeans; full colonization required the complete removal of control from local administrations (Settles, 1996). To achieve this, they demonstrated their vastly superior military power—already evident since the initial coastal invasions—and instilled fear among local rulers (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012). Uprisings against the occupations were swiftly suppressed, with local leaders either killed or exiled by the colonizers. These invasions resulted in the deaths of many indigenous people and the dismantling of existing governance structures. One of the factors that further escalated the violence was again the Berlin Conference. Among the resolutions passed was the “principle of effective occupation.” According to this clause, merely possessing a port on the coast did not constitute legitimate control over a region; only actual occupation and the exercise of full authority would grant territorial sovereignty (Armaoğlu, 1997). The Berlin Conference thus gave colonization a veneer of legal legitimacy in the eyes of European powers, which in turn intensified the severity of the invasions. Through strategic planning, they systematically dismantled indigenous governments. A key tactic involved interfering in the internal affairs of African states and manipulating them to serve European interests. Ultimately, driven by economic gains, European powers came to dominate most parts of Africa—not only economically but also politically.(Rodney, 2012)

Another tactic used by European powers to secure political dominance was to overthrow existing leaders and replace them with loyal allies, often drawn in by various promises. (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012) As noted in numerous sources, one of the primary reasons for Africa’s continued underdevelopment, even decades later, is the weakness of its political institutions. These weaknesses gave rise to unstable and self-serving political systems, even during the decolonization period, often

perpetuated by African leaders themselves (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013). Not only economic but also political dependency on external forces became a lasting feature of post-colonial African governance. The existence of political institutions that operated not for the benefit of the public but for the interests of a few individuals and foreign actors reveals the deep rooted structural decay inherited from colonial rule.

Wallerstein offers a different perspective on this phenomenon. According to him, the opportunity for individuals in positions of power, who had emerged from extreme poverty, to live significantly better lives than the rest of the population led them to engage in corruption and suppress their own people in order to protect their privileged status. (Wallerstein, 2020) The fact that this mentality has been passed down through generations reflects the enduring psychological impact of colonial violence.

Regardless of the means, maintaining full authority over Africa was critical for European powers. On the other hand, as observed even before the colonial era, Africa's economic dependence on Europe was also obvious. As a result, the emergence of social disintegration became inevitable. The existence of numerous ethnically distinct local administrations in Africa further facilitated European domination, as it enabled a strategy of "divide and rule" (Rodney, 2012). Soon after the onset of the scramble for Africa, European forces began systematically advancing into the interior, either by occupying strategic areas or by making agreements with local native states. After 1880, France launched a series of military campaigns with great effort, moving deeper into the continent. These expeditions later evolved into political maneuvers. One notable example is France's agreement with a local ruler in Bamako, located along the Niger River. Despite opposition from other European powers, this agreement allowed France to assert its dominance in the region. (Keltie, 1895) In a similar manner, France asserted its military presence in the regions of Senegal and Sudan, establishing a centralized and hierarchical administrative structure. Nonetheless, it allowed local populations some degree of autonomy in preserving their political identities. In Congo, however, the situation was entirely different. Following King Leopold II of Belgium's occupation, the violence inflicted upon the local population—particularly in the service of rubber production—was so extreme that it led to the death of nearly half of the population. (Demir, 2011)

As discussed in the previous section, the weakness and inadequacy of political institutions in Africa left local societies vulnerable to external interventions. The main reason for this fragility was the dominance of tribal and clan-based structures in Africa, rather than centralized and homogeneous local authorities. (Taşkın, 2018). In addition to this, some regions were home to kingdoms and traditional governance systems led by various ethnic groups (Akbaş, 2024). However, European powers viewed all these local authorities and leaders as primitive, weak, and easy to control. This perception enabled European colonizers to quickly and easily dominate targeted areas through the strategy of divide and rule.

For instance, Britain's penetration into the interior of Nigeria in opposition to France can be seen as an example of this strategy. With nearly 250 distinct ethnic groups, Nigeria became a suitable ground for British manipulation. By forming alliances with leading local chiefs, Britain eventually established the Royal Niger Company (Kavak, 2021). One of the most influential groups in the region, the Fulah people, who were spread across much of Nigeria, governed in Futa Jallon and opposed French colonialism, while cooperating with the British (Keltie, 1895). Through the capital accumulated by the Royal Niger Company, British political and commercial influence expanded along the Niger River.

Although colonial powers had agreed upon political boundaries in Africa during the Berlin Conference, their rivalry continued. The relationships they built with African communities were shaped more by distrust and competition with one another than by a pure interest in natural resources. Consequently, colonial powers often promised African communities "protection" against rival European powers. For example, France's agreement with the Mponkwe people in Gabon was based on such promises (Daban, 2021). Following the signing of protection treaties with local leaders, France established its first military and administrative outposts in the region.

Although colonial states initially settled in these areas under the pretense of offering support and protection, they later ignored the interests of the local populations. They seized full control of governance and assumed sole authority. In Nigeria, British appointed colonial governors eliminated the influence of indigenous leaders who had previously maintained cooperative relations with the French (Kavak, 2021). In a similar way, France, after placing Gabon under its protection, administratively merged it with other colonies (Cameroon, Congo, and Equatorial

Guinea) into a single colonial unit (Daban, 2021). By disregarding ethnic and religious diversity in the regions they controlled, colonial powers brought together different groups under a single system for their own benefit, which often led to significant internal conflicts.

In conclusion, the interference in the internal affairs of indigenous states and the removal of their administrative authority became a fundamental cause of the long standing political instability that would persist for generations. These political interventions by European powers are closely linked to the problem of centralization observed in many sub-Saharan African countries. Moreover, the arbitrary drawing of borders across Africa not only triggered intense civil conflicts by mixing religious and ethnic groups but also prevented the formation of any sense of national unity. The differing administrative approaches adopted by colonial powers further reveal the political divergence between African states. For example, unlike Britain, France aimed to assimilate the territories it occupied by imposing its own cultural and social values. Britain, on the other hand, allowed local administrations to continue functioning, creating a system of indirect rule through close oversight (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012). As a result, political institutions across the African continent were governed in a disorderly and shortsighted manner.

4.3 Social and Cultural Impact

Although the colonized African states may have felt a sense of relief and joy upon gaining their sovereignty, the reality was that they were entering a future in which they would deeply experience not only the lingering political and economic influence of European powers, but also their enduring social and cultural impacts (Bulhan, 2015). As European forces expanded across the African continent, they imbued their colonial activities with different meanings aimed at consolidating their presence and simplifying control over African populations. Consequently, they profoundly altered and effectively eradicated the continent's indigenous culture and social structures. (Inaltekin, 2023) Africa suffered prolonged identity crises and widespread social and cultural deterioration. All of this stemmed from the Europeans' perception of Africans as primitive and uncivilized, justifying the systematic replacement of native values. These values included religion, education, ethnicity,

and language, all of which were profoundly damaged under the constant interference of European colonial powers.

Firstly, colonial powers sought to prevent potential solidarity among national and ethnic groups that might resist occupation. To achieve this, they implemented informal boundary plans that deliberately dispersed these groups across different regions. However, this strategy laid the groundwork for large scale civil wars during the colonial period and in the post-independence era (Mızrak, 2022). Africa was a continent composed of numerous tribes formed by diverse ethnic groups. Prior to colonization, in areas such as Congo and Nigeria, there were significant efforts by tribal communities to unite and pursue nation building. However, the colonial interventions heightened intergroup tensions and transformed them into violent conflicts (Rodney, 2012).

The ethnic distortions imposed on the continent not only intensified competition among groups but also contributed to the emergence of insecure and unstable environments. The fragmentation of these groups also led to the distortion of beliefs, cultures, and spoken languages. Naturally, these issues were of no concern to the colonial powers, who only care their own interests. Just as they took a series of diplomatic and educational initiatives to spread their own religions, cultures, and languages to the colonized regions. Over time, these initiatives evolved into a long-term strategic plan known as *the civilizing mission*, aimed at disguising the realities of colonialism and legitimizing their control. What was portrayed to the world as a benevolent mission was, in truth, a complete disregard for African cultures, an imposition of European values, and a deliberate attempt to assimilate the local population.

4.3.1 Missionary activities

Activities aimed at converting African populations to Christianity, introducing European style education, and promoting European ways of life began with the arrival of Christian missionaries on the continent in early 19th century. In schools established to spread Christianity, education was based on European models. While education is generally considered beneficial under any circumstance, it is important to note that Europeans provided only a limited form of colonial education that served

the interests of colonial rule and was designed solely to benefit their exploitative activities (Şahin & Şahin, 2023).

Even before the interior regions of Africa were explored by Europeans, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) from Britain had already begun its activities in East Africa. (Oliver, 1970) However, this was not the first Christian missionary initiative on the continent. As Spanish and Portuguese merchants increased their voyages toward Africa, missionaries accompanying them established mission centers along the coasts of Senegal and Gabon. (Aksoy, 2019) With the onset of colonialism, clergy members launched widespread missionary movements with the goal of converting every African community they encountered to Christianity. (Kavas, 2004) For Europeans, Christianization was considered an essential part of the “civilizing mission.” It was driven by the belief that African religious practices were either pagan or satanic. Throughout the colonial period, British, French, American, Belgian, Catholic, and Protestant missionaries operated in various regions across the continent. (Keltie, 1895; Scott, 2014) As missionary networks expanded across Africa, they continued to promote religious and moral education aimed at “civilizing” the locals and opposing traditional beliefs. (Vilhanová, 2007) By late 19th century, the number of missionaries on the continent had grown significantly. They had become so influential that their power extended beyond spiritual matters, reaching into political control over land as well. (Oliver, 1970) The education provided by missionaries was generally aimed at training Africans to become efficient clerks and laborers who could serve the administrative needs of colonial powers. (Şahin & Şahin, 2023)

French Cardinal Lavigerie undertook a new initiative focused on orphanages in order to serve the interests of France and the Catholic Church. (Oliver, 1970) Muslim orphans from North and West Africa, as well as enslaved children from other regions, were placed in their orphanages where they received Christian based education. These children were then sent back to their native villages with the aim of continuing Christianization efforts in their communities. (Aksoy, 2019) Initially, most missionary organizations in Africa were dominated by British Protestants. However, as France became more actively involved in colonial activities, the number of Catholic missions grew significantly, eventually equaling that of their Protestant counterparts. Unlike the British missionaries, Catholic missionaries did not

demonstrate overt hostility toward indigenous religions. (Kavas, 2002; Oliver, 1970) During this period, most missionaries assigned to various regions were French, and France led the Catholic missionary effort with over 20,000 priests and nuns operating across the continent, present almost everywhere except in Spanish and Italian colonies. (Kavas, 2004) In all their operations, Catholic missionaries declared themselves as representatives of France. (Keltie, 1895) Through the construction of churches and schools, their initial objective was to instill knowledge of Christianity among Africans. Alongside France, the United States, Britain, and Germany played major roles in missionary activity, with additional support from countries such as Italy, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, and Norway. (Kavas,2002)

As in Europe, religion was expected to serve as a unifying force over social, political, and even economic factors in the territories occupied by colonial powers in Africa. Missionary activity on the continent focused heavily on religion and education, thereby gaining the ability to influence society on a mass scale, while also introducing new economic practices (Oliver, 1970). As previously stated, the primary goal of this approach was to consolidate control over the continent and strengthen protection against external influences. Therefore, the rapid intensification and spread of missionary activity in Africa is not surprising. Although some sources emphasize the benevolent intentions of missionary work in Africa, the fact that Christianization efforts were carried out in parallel with colonial expansion makes it difficult to overlook the underlying motives and true intentions of these religious actors.

4.3.2 The civilizing mission and white man's burden

The concept of “civilize” generally refers to educating a society and promoting its cultural development (Cambridge Dictionary). This concept became especially prominent during 19th century colonialism and served as a justification for European activities in Africa. For the Europeans, the idea of “civilizing” Africa provided a form of legitimacy for exploitation. The processes of missionary work and civilizing efforts evolved into a systematic and parallel structure. While Europeans claimed to take on the mission of civilizing the societies they colonized, they also defined these societies as primitive, underdeveloped, and godless. However, the core function of the civilizing mission was to conceal two contradictory motives rooted in material and ideological interests (Gençoğlu & Yol,

2022). In regions where Europeans planned to establish long term control for economic gain, they simultaneously assumed the role of civilizers. They attempted to impose their own religion, education systems, and other Western values on indigenous populations, with the aim of assimilating them. Through this mission, they also sought to create loyal and useful societies that would serve their interests.

The term “civilizing mission” (*mission civilisatrice*) was first introduced by French politician Jules Ferry during a speech in the French Parliament in 1885, in which he addressed the Madagascar issue. In his speech, Ferry argued that the superior race had a right—rather than a mere desire—to rule over the inferior race, claiming that colonization was not an act of exploitation but of bringing civilization (Rimbaud, 1903). This discourse laid the ideological foundation for French colonialism in Africa. The fact that France was the first to explicitly adopt the civilizing mission was also tied to the ideals of the French Revolution (Gençoğlu & Yol, 2022). However, at its core, this belief and motivation were inherited from the colonial ideology of the First French Empire. The aim was not only to expand for economic and political reasons, but also to extend the French race and create an “Overseas France” (*La France outre-mer*) by assimilating colonized peoples (Roberts, 1929). The belief in the racial superiority of the French was ever present, and the spread of French ideas and values significantly shaped their colonial policies.

Based on Ferry’s discourse, it can be argued that the British reflected similar ideological tendencies, even not having as long a historical background as the French. In 1910, Arthur James Balfour, during a speech in the House of Commons about Egypt, emphasized that the Egyptian people possessed an ancient civilization and represented a great race. However, he also claimed that it required a superior statesman—such as himself—to govern them (Said, 1979; Aksoy, 2019). Notably, his use of the term “Oriental” when referring to the East appears to have been a deliberate choice within a political and geographical context. In the same speech, Balfour mentioned the financial costs Britain bore to maintain its administration and colonial presence in the East, referring it as part of the white man’s burden (Magdoff, 1969, p. 136). The phrase “white man’s burden” originally comes from a poem written in 1899 by Rudyard Kipling, intended to encourage and justify American and British rule over non-white races (Brantlinger, 2007). In the poem, Kipling presents the task of civilizing non-white peoples as a burden borne by the white race. The

“young men” mentioned in the poem are described as taking on this burden by going to colonized regions as missionaries, fighting against non-Christian beliefs. Here, the representation of the white race reveals a form of racism based not only on civilizational superiority but also explicitly on skin color. The poem clearly illustrates the problematic connection between imperialism and racism, making this link especially evident (Brantlinger, 2007).

However, the reasons why the concept of race was emphasized so strongly by Europeans can be easily understood by looking back a few centuries into European history. As previously discussed, during the age of geographical explorations, Europeans were surprised not only by the cultural differences of the people they encountered but more importantly by the fact that these people seemed to belong to different races. This confusion was primarily rooted in religious beliefs. According to the Holy Scripture, all humans were descended from Adam and Eve. Therefore, Europeans struggled to believe that people with skin colors other than white could have come from the same origin (Bernasconi, 2022).

This theological dilemma coincided with the rise of the transatlantic slave trade, turning the race question into a significant issue that would deeply influence European philosophical thought. Prominent thinkers of the Enlightenment began to define the concept of race in ways that would shape Western philosophy.

The term “race” started to be used in its modern sense in late 17th century, and people were mainly classified based on physical characteristics—especially skin color. For example, Immanuel Kant approached race primarily through color and sought to give it a scientific explanation. Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, on the other hand, offered a more complex classification, grouping people based on their physical traits and geographic origins. Voltaire introduced a hierarchical perspective of race, placing Black people almost at the bottom—close to animals in his scale of classification. Even earlier, John Locke, though less focused on race itself, provided political justification for slavery. Based on the African slave trade, he argued that enslaved people were deprived of rights and could not be considered fully human. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, adopting a more Eurocentric and explicitly racist approach, described Africans as barbaric, cannibalistic, and unconscious (Bernasconi, 2022).

In the light of all these views, expressed by some of the most influential philosophers of the Enlightenment—a period considered the pinnacle of European intellectual history—laid the ideological groundwork for the colonial mindset of later Western empires. For Europeans who deeply believed that the original human color was white, the concept of race was no less significant than the material gains they acquired in Africa or other regions.

4.3.3 Education

As expected, educational processes in Africa were largely shaped by missionary activities. Some institutions, however, were secular schools established directly by colonial powers. The primary objective of colonial education was undoubtedly to provide basic instruction centered on Christianization. (Vilhanová, 2007) For the colonizers, the priority was to instill and disseminate their own religion. Alongside Christianity—which they perceived as the “correct” belief system—they aimed to create a pious and civilized society. Naturally, European cultural norms and values were also directly imposed in the process.

One of the primary impositions of colonialism was language, as communication between the colonizer and the colonized had to be established. For this reason, language schools were established as early as the initial stages of occupation. (Şahin & Şahin, 2023) In the field of language education, missionaries played a prominent role, particularly in the context of religious instruction. Initially, they began by learning local African languages, translating and publishing the Bible and many other religious texts. (Kavas, 2004) Catholic missionaries, in particular, made significant progress in this area by developing grammatical structures, alphabets, and phrasebooks, thereby laying the foundation for formal linguistic studies. (Vilhanová, 2007) However, over time, the language issue took a different turn. Speaking European languages began to signify elevated status both for the speakers themselves and in the eyes of the colonizers. In contrast, native language speakers were viewed as inferior. This deterioration of the linguistic bond among local communities gradually accelerated the process of cultural alienation. The abandonment of indigenous African languages in favor of European ones—perceived as more modern and superior—along with the adoption of French and English as

primary languages in education, clearly illustrates the linguistic damage inflicted by colonialism. (Bulhan, 2015)

The perception that locals who spoke a foreign language held a superior status was especially prevalent in French colonies. In fact, individuals from the upper class who were educated through the French schooling system often maintained a special relationship with the French. (Mızrak, 2022) Compared to other colonial powers, France placed greater emphasis on transmitting its cultural values, aiming to “Frenchify” the indigenous populations. This strategy likely stemmed from France’s desire to establish stronger cultural bonds with its colonies. Even in the post-colonial period, it is possible to observe the continued presence of well-established French schools. These schools implemented curricula focused primarily on the French language, history, and cultural heritage. Beyond formal schooling, other French educational and cultural institutions played a significant role in strengthening France’s cultural influence, including the Institut Français (French Cultural Center), Alliance Française, Campus France, and the Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency). (Mızrak, 2022)

The education provided by the French in their colonies was largely based on religious motives. Catholic missionaries were particularly eager to spread their faith and believed that religious conversion would be more effective with schooling (Gallego & Woodberry, 2009). Before the First World War, the main objective of education for the indigenous peoples was Christianization; rather than educating them, Europeans sought to transform them (Aydoğan & Fidan, 2022). However, compared to the French education system, the British system was more flexible. Instead of fully anglicizing the population, British colonialism allowed local structures to remain intact while prioritizing its own colonial framework. British missionaries advocated for religious freedom. By operating independently of the colonial administration, they were able to freely continue their activities and provide education as they wished in a greater number of colonies. (Gallego & Woodberry, 2009) Through the *laissez-faire* approach applied in the British colonies, missionary activities—free from the educational and political bureaucracy characteristic of the French system—became more effective and influential (White, 1996). In contrast, France, openly pursuing an assimilation policy, applied its own centralized educational model in the colonies, restricting general education in order to create an

elite class. This elite was primarily intended to fill the ranks of colonial administration with African officials (White, 1996).

In the British system, however, the goal was to establish a broader educational model. British missions generally aimed to create more literate and devout Africans and initiated mass education programs toward this aim. In a short period, both the White Fathers and the Church Missionary Society significantly increased the number of schools. At the same time, the British government provided financial support to expand and promote schooling. Thus, by persistently pursuing missionary activities not only among the elite but also across a wider population, the British distinguished themselves in terms of educational outcomes in the colonies (Gallego & Woodberry, 2009; Aydođan & Fidan, 2022).

In conclusion, the missionary competition in Africa—while ostensibly aimed at civilizing and developing societies through education—ultimately pushed the continent toward disorder and distortion. By imposing their own cultural values, colonial powers deprived societies of their indigenous traditions, thereby intensifying ethnic divisions. Distanced from their traditional education systems and Westernized, these societies became fragmented and faced identity crises. Colonial powers regarded education as the most effective means to create communities culturally bound and loyal to them. The underlying reason for this belief was their perception of Africans as uneducated. Believing they had educated Africans and instilled their own culture, the colonizers in fact alienated Africa from its own heritage, leaving them with hollowed out traditions and values. (Sereto, 2011)

However, each of the African societies that were regarded as uneducated already had their own education system. It is evident that all communities with culture possessed distinct methods and variations in education, as in other areas, according to their own needs. In Africa—home to the greatest cultural diversity—it would be misleading to evaluate education within a single framework. Although the perception imposed by the Western perspective portrays Africans as uneducated and primitive from the Middle Ages to the modern era, this perception does not reflect reality. Since the European concept of education was largely limited to literacy, the functional nature of the physical, psychological, and moral education given in Africa from childhood to adulthood was not acknowledged by them (Aydođan & Fidan, 2022). Indigenous peoples educated their children in accordance with the culture of

their tribal communities and the social roles they were expected to assume. Traditional education included the teaching of social structure, language, and laws, as well as skills such as hunting, religious ceremonies, material production, and animal husbandry, all aimed at integrating individuals into their tribes (Sereto, 2011).

Although the continent may appear to consist of complex regions and cultures, African history is rich and diverse. Sources of this history include archaeological findings, written records, and oral traditions. Influenced by the ancient civilizations of Egypt, the African continent developed in various cultural domains, including writing systems and mathematics. Empires such as Mali, Songhay, and Ethiopia played an important role in fostering interest in trade, art, and science (Akbaş, 2024). The development of trade, agriculture, crafts, and hunting in daily social life was rooted in family based education over generations. Moreover, before colonization, regions such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Mali possessed traditional educational institutions and libraries. These institutions provided vocational or religious instruction for the needs of the community. Education was generally provided in various regions, irrespective of whether they were Muslim, pagan, or of another beliefs. (Orakçı, 2018).

Although often informal, it can be said that indigenous education existed in Africa for centuries. This form of education was adapted to the needs of the community in its simplest form. Attempting to replace the value systems unique to African societies with a different system would be misguided.

5. CONCLUSION

Colonialism, which constitutes the primary cause of Africa's persistent instability, poverty, and developmental challenges, has imposed a burden that the continent was unable to bear. It can be argued that, beyond the social fabric, the economic and political structures—essential for the sustainable development of African states—were profoundly disrupted by colonial practices. These structures were systematically undermined, particularly as colonial activities intensified and became more ruthless under the influence of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. This thesis has examined the extent to which the Industrial Revolution, from its earliest stages, shaped Europe's colonial activities in Africa. The findings suggest that industrialization not only brought about economic and technological transformation within Europe but also fundamentally redefined the very nature of colonialism. The increasing demand for raw materials, the search for new markets, and the need for cheap labor directed European states' attention decisively toward Africa.

The research first identified the factors that directly or indirectly paved the way for the Industrial Revolution. In reviewing the historical process, it becomes evident that economic systems such as commercial capitalism not only accelerated industrialization in Europe but also sustained colonialism by securing access to natural resources. Within this framework, the emergence of colonialism during the Age of Discovery can be interpreted as the beginning of an intensified competition among European powers. The fact that this rivalry persisted for centuries, largely at Africa's expense, demonstrates how deeply the continent was subjected to exploitation. While Spain and Portugal initially pursued colonial expansion within the framework of mercantilist ideology, Britain, France, and Germany later assumed this role with the rise of capitalism. In both cases, the understanding of colonialism was reshaped in accordance with the needs and conditions of the period. It can therefore be argued that mercantilism effectively laid the foundations for capitalism, providing the necessary conditions for its emergence. Major European powers

managed this process in line with their own interests, constructing efficient economic systems sustained by the exploitation of colonial resources. The leading colonial powers owed their success in the industrialization process to a series of significant domestic factors. Although the Industrial Revolution, generally accepted to have originated in England, relied heavily on colonial resources, they shaped this process through its own economic, social, and political structures. Britain, for instance, sustained its technological capacity with resources drawn from its colonies and implemented economic policies designed to preserve the stability of the system. Its dominance at sea and its military strength were largely rooted in this foundation. In contrast, the French Revolution profoundly transformed France's political system and social structure, but also pushed the country behind Britain in both industrialization and the colonial race. The extraordinary conditions created by the Revolution forced the state to impose strict measures and restrictions in the economy as in other spheres. Naturally, this situation has slowed down the country's industrial progress. Indeed, Germany eventually reached a position where it could rival France. Germany's motivation derived from the Zollverein and the subsequent unification of the German states. Although Germany entered the colonial race later than other powers, its impact was nonetheless significant. By the eve of the First World War, Germany had consolidated its power, preserved stability in industry, and developed a military capacity rooted in nationalism. This position enabled Germany to take the lead in organizing the Berlin Conference and to secure significant colonial holdings in Africa.

The common denominator in this fierce struggle among European states was colonialism. Each power was aware that achieving economic strength required colonial possessions as well. Yet, as the process was far from simple, the intensification of colonial wars made it inevitable for states to employ different strategies and methods. Europeans, who disregarded humanitarian and moral values for a long time, continued slavery and the slave trade through alternative practices, despite formally prohibiting them. Likewise, in order to justify the plunder of Africa and to legitimize their actions morally, they developed the so-called "civilizing mission." In this period, industrialization, technological superiority, advances in transportation and communication, and ideological discourses such as the civilizing collectively provided the legitimacy framework for colonialism. Through this

mission, Europeans sought not only to dominate Africa economically but also to exert cultural control. As a result, colonial activities in Africa acquired a new dimension.

The economic consequences of colonialism in Africa manifested in the systematic exploitation of natural resources and the collapse of traditional production systems. As resources were extracted exclusively for the benefit of colonial powers, African societies derived little or no economic gain for their own development. Politically, artificial borders and centralized administrative models laid the foundations for long lasting instability across the continent. In reality, local rulers never exercised full sovereignty; they were always subordinated to colonial authorities, and over time, most local powers were fully transferred to European control. Socially and culturally, education, religion, and communal structures were placed under European dominance, thereby weakening Africa's own dynamics. Persistent identity conflicts have their roots in this erosion of indigenous structures.

One of the most important findings of this study is that the colonial experience profoundly shaped Africa's current economic and social position. Many structural problems faced by the continent today can be traced back to the legacy of colonialism, which was intensified by the Industrial Revolution. Nonetheless, Africa was not merely a passive victim; independence movements, regional cooperation, and cultural resistance demonstrate the continent's efforts to reconstruct its own future. However, for these efforts to succeed, both internal reforms and the establishment of more equitable international relations are essential.

The findings of this study are largely consistent with existing scholarship, yet they also diverge in certain respects. Much of the literature (e.g., Rodney, 2011; Osterhammel & Jansen, 2023) explains Africa's underdevelopment primarily through colonialism and the unequal relations institutionalized after the Industrial Revolution. This thesis similarly demonstrates that industrialization fundamentally reshaped Africa's economic structures and deepened patterns of dependency. However, it further emphasizes how technological advancements (such as steamships, railways, and the telegraph) reshaped colonial practices and how ideological discourses like the civilizing mission served as instruments of legitimacy. In this respect, the thesis contributes to the literature by highlighting the often ignored interaction between ideology, technology, and colonialism.

Moreover, while a portion of existing research tends to portray Africa as a passive subject, this thesis underscores the active role of African societies through independence struggles, regional solidarity, and cultural resistance. In doing so, it challenges the one dimensional narrative of Africa as merely a victim and proposes a more nuanced perspective. In conclusion, this thesis can be regarded as a contribution to the literature that not only affirms existing approaches but also offers a multidimensional analysis of Africa's colonial experience.

More precisely, when discussing African colonialism, it is essential to distinguish between medieval colonialism and the later type shaped by the Industrial Revolution. The demands and methods of colonial practices during these different historical periods should be analyzed in depth. Colonialism in Africa, which spans a long historical timeline, was shaped by various factors depending on the specific conditions and opportunities of each period. Therefore, identifying the structural foundations of these factors accurately is essential.

This study analyzes all arguments through a comparative qualitative research approach, focusing on phenomena that are generally considered important and prominent in the field. Therefore, one of the study's inadequacies is that it does not include sufficient comparative analysis of regional cases across Africa. By conducting micro level analyses of the economic, social, and cultural conditions of African countries, the varying degrees of colonial impact can be understood more clearly. As the African continent consists of diverse regions, the effects of colonialism varied accordingly. In addition, the free market competition among the major European states during the industrialization process can also be examined. This system, which limited state intervention, encouraged competition and free trade. As a result, the intensification and increased aggressiveness of colonial efforts can be better understood in relation to the dynamics of economic liberalization and competition, as well as how this affected the colonized territories.

Both of these aspects have the potential to significantly enhance the comprehensiveness of the study.

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