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### The British flag on both sides of Indian Ocean: Coloniser's rational

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#### Abstract

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the British established themselves as the major power in the Indian Ocean Region, a position won by aggressive commercial activity, maritime power, and incessant fighting against indigenous polities and European 'great power' rivals. Indian sub-continent was ruled by the British East India Company for hundred years whose eventual end was precipitated by the Indian mutiny of 1857. The following year the British crown assumed control over India using both direct and indirect methods, until 1947. Now on East Africa side, British formal acceptance of a sphere of influence on the main land was brought many new responsibility, opportunity and problems. As a signatory of the Berlin Conference in 1885, Britain was obligated to Africans, stop out the slave trade, and open the continent for commercial development and missionary enterprise. Historians have argued that the British acquired not only an opportunity to augment her imperial real to settle a new area with British people and to build another great British dominion but also an opportunity to ease the burden of administration in India by providing an overseas outlet for Indian burgeoning population. To develop Africa along with the responsibility of India, Indians were encouraged and transported to east Africa by their colonial master as railway workers, artisans, small traders and as soldiers. Famous British colonial administrator F.D. Lugard argued that the railway construction to east Africa would promote India immigration to East Africa who would be involved to develop Africa. However, the Europeans rulers boasted of themselves as remaining the rulers of Africa, and lowly categorized Indians as developers and the African as labourers. The article therefore, examines the role of Indians who were accorded by their colonial masters to develop East Africa. Further this, this would even critically assess the role of British policies towards the racial differences between two communities, Indians and Africans. Finally, it will uncover the British desire who tactfully raised their national flag on both sides of Indian Ocean.

**Keywords:** India, East Africa, colonialism, British, European

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#### Introduction

Both India and East Africa were British colonies for many years. However, it must be pointed out that the two territories were not colonised by the British at the same time. The British established themselves as the major power in the Indian Ocean Region, India and East Africa to be specific, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries respectively. Vasco da Gama's arrival in Calicut on 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1498 opened a sea route for European sailors to the East. Following Vasco da Gama's arrival in Asia, the Europeans developed interest in Asia after they realized that the continent was rich in spices and other raw materials which were highly needed in European industries. Therefore, the arrival of Vasco da Gama in Asia opened windows for European traders and others which finally led to the colonization of India and Africa.

Having realized that Asia was a good and favour able place for trade, especially in spices, the British Joint Stock Company known as East India Company was founded by John Watts and George White in 1600 AD to conduct trade with South and South-East Asian countries. The East India Company was purely a British company whose shares were owned by British merchants and aristocrats. It is cardinal to state here that this company had no direct link to the British government. In other words, this company was not owned by the British government, but by some British merchants.

The British merchants officially landed on Indian Subcontinent at the port of Surat on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1608 AD. The main reason that made them move to India was trade. However, after seven years the British got Royal order to establish a factory at Surat under the leadership of Sir Thomas Roe (Ambassador of James I). Having established a factory at Surat, the next step for the East India Company was to get permission from the Vijaynagara Empire to enable them set up their second factory in Madras. More trading posts were established along the east and west coasts of India. Significant English communities developed around the three presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras<sup>[1]</sup>. The East India Company mainly traded in indigo dye, silk, cotton and tea. Within a space of twenty years, the Company was able to extend its presence in India by setting up a factory in Kolkata.

Through the East India Company India fell under the ruler ship of the British for hundred years until the Indian revolt of 1857. The following year the British crown assumed direct control over India for ten years until 1947.

On the other hand, the British found themselves in East Africa following the Berlin Conference of 1885. As a signatory of the Berlin Conference in 1885, Britain was obligated to Africans to stop the slave trade, and open the continent for commercial

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/when-and-why-british-first-landed-on-indian-territory-1504771870-1>.

development and missionary enterprise. Following the signing of the Berlin Conference, the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEACO), a commercial association founded to develop African trade in the areas controlled by the British Empire, was established. The company was incorporated in London on 18 April 1888, and granted a royal charter by Queen Victoria on 6 September 1888. It was led by William Mackinnon and built upon his company's trading activities in the region, with the encouragement of the British government through the granting of an imperial charter.<sup>2</sup> The core responsibility of the IBEAC in East Africa was to start facilitating the construction of a railway that would connect the east coast region of Mombasa to Lake Victoria. According to John, in 1890 F.D. Lugard arrived in Buganda with 100 men as the agent of the Imperial British East Africa Company. His task was to establish British influence in the area agreed to be theirs in the Anglo-Germany Agreement<sup>[3]</sup>. The arrival of Lugard was therefore, the starting point of British activities in East Africa that finally led to the domination of the area by the Europeans. It is important to note that Lugard was born in Chennai, India. His father, F.G. Lugard, was a British Army chaplain at Madras and from his young age F.D. Lugard acquired enough skill to rule any country.

### The role of Indians in East Africa

Indians were accorded a special chance by their colonial masters to settle in different parts of East Africa. Nevertheless, it must be clearly pointed out that the presence of Indians in East Africa did not start following the coming of the European masters. History clearly shows that Indian settlements in East Africa were available way back before India was colonised by the British. George posits that small numbers of Indians have lived in the coastal regions for centuries, arriving long before the days of European settlement.<sup>4</sup> George further expounds that:

Even before the advent of the railway a few Indian traders had penetrated far into the mainland. A leading merchant, Alidina Visram, had established trading posts in Uganda twenty years before the railway reached Lake Victoria. Two other traders, Adamjee Alibhoy and M.G. Puri, were well established at Machakos at the same time<sup>[5]</sup>.

To prove further that the Indians were already in East Africa even before the arrival of the Europeans, the following detailed account is given by George:

One of the earliest recorded navigational accounts, *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, circa* A.D. 80, mentions Indian as well as Arab ships trading along the coast. A Chinese geographical work, dating from about the thirteenth century, mentions Gujerati settle in the same area. Other examples of Indo-Africa connexions may be mentioned briefly. Vasco da Gama was piloted across the Indian Ocean in 1498 by an Indian sailor. The Mogul Emperor, Aurungzeb, employed an African admiral in Bombay. The Nizam of Hyderabad, a Muslim ruler in southern India, had an African guard during the same era. Many Bengal princes had African blood in their veins as a by-product of their number of slaves transported across the ocean in the earlier years. The Muslim

King of Gaur in Bengal (1459-1474) had about 8,000 African slaves. By 1841, when a representative of the Indian Government was first stationed in Zanzibar, thus further involving British interests in East Africa, the local Indian population was estimated at about one thousand. In 1866, before the European powers had begun to extend their influence over what later became known as Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika, and when John Kirk was Vice-Consul in Zanzibar, the Indian community had grown to over 6,000<sup>[6]</sup>.

From the above accounts it is very clear that Indian communities were already established in East Africa even before the arrival of the Europeans. The Indians had links with East Africa through trade that was taking place between the Indians and East Africans. Therefore, it is wrong historically to assume that Indians came to know about Africa following the coming of the Europeans. Marco Polo confirmed during his travels that Indian ships visited the Island of Madeigascar [Madeigascar] and Zanghibar [Zanzibar]<sup>[7]</sup>.

Other than Indians who went to East Africa on their own, before the arrival of the Europeans, the other big group of Indians were accorded chance to go to East Africa by the British. This group went to East Africa on the command of the British mainly because they wanted them to work as labourers during the construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway. George highlights that the Kenya-Uganda railway constructed in the 1890s was the foundation of East African development, and without Indian labour it could not have been built<sup>[8]</sup>. George further states that because of lack of local manpower, it was decided to import Indian coolies. Over 32,000 were finally employed and it is certain that without their labour there could have been no railway. The first batch of 350 arrived in Mombasa in 1896<sup>[9]</sup>.

The idea by the British to send Indians to East Africa during the construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway was necessitated by the need for skilled manpower. It was observed that most of the Africans could not do skilled jobs like driving, welding, carpentry and many more. With this challenge in place, the British had no option but to transport Indians to East Africa. Moreover, even after the construction of the railway was done, Indians were still needed to do some specialized jobs in the railway. "The Kenya-Uganda railway was the foundation of East African development, and without Indian labour it could not have been built, at least for many years. Even when built, it was Indian drivers, signalmen and station-masters who kept the trains running"<sup>[10]</sup>.

One might wonder why the British needed a railway connecting Kenya and Uganda. The reason was that they wanted to connect Lake Victoria to the Indian Ocean. According to George: Railways were to the British Empire what roads were to the Roman, the arteries of power. The desire for effective control of the Nile waters and the dangers of German rivalry created the need for a railway to connect Lake Victoria to the Indian Ocean at Mombasa. Despite jibes about the 'lunatic line' from those in England who wondered how a railway running through commercially barren land could ever pay its way, the railway was

<sup>2</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial\\_British\\_East\\_Africa\\_Company#:~:text=The%20Imperial%20British%20East%20Africa,Victoria%20on%206%20Septem%201888](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_British_East_Africa_Company#:~:text=The%20Imperial%20British%20East%20Africa,Victoria%20on%206%20Septem%201888)

<sup>3</sup>John, D. Anderson, *West and East Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983), pp. 281-282.

<sup>4</sup>George Delf, *Asians in East Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 1.

<sup>5</sup>George, *Asians in East Africa*, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>George, *Asians in East Africa*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>7</sup>Marco Polo, *Travels*, Book III (London: Longman, 1818), Chapter 26.

<sup>8</sup>George, *Asians in East Africa*, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup>George, *Asians in East Africa*, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup>George, *Asians in East Africa*, p. 14.

sanctioned in 1895 and completed six years later. It cost the British tax-payers £5,502,592<sup>[11]</sup>.

Apart from working as labourers, the Indians who came to East Africa played other roles in the region. One of such roles was to link Africa to other parts of the world through trade. Ghai stresses that the same labourers adopted a business venture, and, of all people who were at one time or another involved in the East African trade, indeed the Indians showed themselves the most persistent and more resilient<sup>[12]</sup>. Coupland adds that much of the ocean-shipping along the coast was Indian-owned and Indian manned. It is probable that the Indians were from the earliest days the master of finance, the bankers and money-changers and money-lenders<sup>[13]</sup>. The Indians introduced Africa to trade with the aid of money which was never there before their arrival. With the introduction of trade by the Indians in East Africa, Africans were able to sell their products to the outside world. On the other hand, they (Africans) were able to receive goods from both India and Europe. With the availability of Indian and European goods, Africans lived better lives. However, one negative aspect about Indian traders in East Africa was that they used to finance many of the Arab trade and slave caravans in the interior of the mainland and thus played an important part in the East African slave trade<sup>[14]</sup>.

One important aspect about Indian merchants was that there was a special group of merchants that moved to East Africa on its own. This was a group of well to do people socially and economically. These were neither illiterate nor poor like those who were taken to East Africa as labourers or indentures. Krishan observes that:

Some Indians came on their own initiative and were different from those who came as indenture labourers and who were extremely poor, with limited education, and with little subsequent mobility. These people came for the purpose of trade and set up small businesses, such as general stores known to this day as the *duka*, originating from the Hindi word *dukan* meaning a shop<sup>[15]</sup>. Apart from those who went as merchants, there was another distinguished group of people who migrated to East Africa to go and work for their relatives in different aspects of the economy. Prominent among such people were those that went to work as shop keepers, clerks and artisans. Ghai and Ghai expound that many came as shop assistants, to work for their kinsmen but with hopes of starting their own shops. Others came as clerks and artisans, also harbouring ambitions of moving into commerce<sup>[16]</sup>. The other crucial role played by Indians who were accorded chance by their colonial masters to develop East Africa was their involvement in East African politics. Instead of playing a neutral role or support their colonial masters who had brought them to East Africa, some Indians supported Africans who wanted to become independent from the bondage of colonialism. One would wonder why the Indians decided to help Africans during their struggle for independence. The Indians aided Africans to

become independent mainly for economic gain knowing that they (Indians) were going to trade and interact freely with Africans if the latter became independent. Krishna underscores this point by alluding to the fact that Indians were actively involved in African politics for economic gain<sup>[17]</sup>. To avoid being noticed and then be punished by their masters, the Indian supported the Africans privately without the knowledge of the British. According to Krishna:

The Asians contributed to the nationalist cause through moral and most importantly through financial support, which was done in a discreet manner. Consequently, their contribution remained unnoticed by the colonial authorities and was misguided as they saw most members of the Asian community as sympathizer of the colonial ruler. Hence, they were left alone to transact their business unimpeded<sup>[18]</sup>.

The Indians had to help the Africans privately because if they were noticed by their colonial masters they were going to be punished by being stopped to trade or even being killed. Therefore, to maintain peace with their masters, they had to support African nationalism discreetly.

The other vital role played by Indians in East Africa was to work as soldiers and police officers. Ghai and Ghai observe that troops from India were relied on to establish "law and order"<sup>[19]</sup>. Indians were highly needed in East Africa to provide law and order because, then, there were no trained Africans that could work as soldiers or police officers. However, these Indian units were withdrawn as soon as African troops had been trained to provide law and order<sup>[20]</sup>. The provision of law and order was very cardinal because some African groups used to attack both the British and the Indians. Therefore, to ensure that there was safety in the society, Indians were recruited to safeguard the communities.

Farming was yet another great contribution of the Indians from Gujarat and the Punjab to East Africa. It is cardinal to observe here that most of the immigrants from Gujarat and the Punjab that came on their own from India to East Africa were peasant farmers. These greatly contributed to the welfare of the people in East Africa. Their agricultural activities improved the lives of the ordinary people because they learnt how to cultivate different crops which they in turn used for their home use and even selling to others. Ghai and Ghai explain that most of the migrants from India to East Africa were peasant farmers<sup>[21]</sup>. Above all, these peasant farmers did not require official efforts to migrate.

The fact that some Indians in East Africa worked for their colonial masters did not make them forget about their home country. History clearly shows that Indians in East Africa always thought about their home country whenever they made wealthy. Thurnwald, a sociologist, describes how some Indians in pre-war Kenya sent part of their earnings home to India by stating that a teacher, for example, who earns 200 shillings sends 100 shillings

<sup>11</sup>George, *Asians in East Africa*, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup>Ghai, P. Dharam, *Portraits of a Minority. Asians in East Africa* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup>Sir, R. Coupland, *East Africa and Its Invaders* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), p.27.

<sup>14</sup>George, *Asians in East Africa*, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup>Kamini, Krishna, *History of Migration and Contributions of Indian Women in Zambia: Comparison with South African Indian Women*, *Anthropos* 111, 2016, p. 639.

<sup>16</sup>Ghai, P. Yash and Ghai P. Dharam, *The Asian Minorities of East and Central (Up to 1971)* (London: Minority Rights Group. (Minority Rights Group Report, 4), 1971, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup>Krishna, *History of Migration and Contributions of Indian Women in Zambia*, p. 640.

<sup>18</sup>Krishna, *History of Migration and Contributions of Indian Women in Zambia*, p. 641.

<sup>19</sup>Ghai, and Ghai, *The Asian Minorities of East and Central*, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup>Ghai and Ghai, *The Asian Minorities of East and Central*, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup>Ghai and Ghai, *The Asian Minorities of East and Central*, p. 6.

home, and on this sum the entire family can live in India <sup>[22]</sup>. Consequently, despite being many kilometers away from home, Indians in East Africa were able to think about their families back home and send them part of their earnings which enabled them to survive.

### The British Adoption of Divide and Rule Policy

Other than the role of Indians who were accorded by their colonial masters to develop East Africa, the other vital aspect covered in this article is the role of British policies towards the racial differences between two communities, Indians and Africans. The British, Indians and Africans, in spite of living in the same community in East Africa, did not live as one. There was a visible hierarchy which consisted of rulers, developers and labourers. According to Krishna, the European rulers boasted of themselves as remaining the rulers of Africa, and lowly categorized Indians as developers and the African as labourers. The lack of racial integration between the three communities, imposed indirectly by the British rulers, facilitated this to some extent <sup>[23]</sup>. Europeans also maintained their superiority amongst the Indians and Africans, they stirred up conflict amongst them <sup>[24]</sup>.

Despite the two communities, Indians and Africans, living in the same place, the British rulers used different policies on each of them. Having come together with the Indians from India, the British were expected to treat the Indians better than the Africans. To the contrary, the British policies favoured the Africans and not the Indians. Despite the application of racial policies by the British to separate Indians and Africans, the two groups could however interact in some circumstance. Ghai and Ghai states that while Asian-African relations developed in a context of the racial society which colonialism established, and while it is true that this discouraged inter-racial contacts, there were autonomous areas in which the two communities, Asians and Africans, interacted <sup>[25]</sup>. The interaction between the Indians and Africans was mostly through trade. This was in circumstances where Indians employed Africans as shopkeepers.

The two groups, Indians and Africans, were segregated by the British in different aspects of life. The British ensured that they had good services compared to the primitive and less services they offered to the Indians and Africans. Ghai and Ghai outline that:

More specifically, the Asians were affected by official policy in their social political activities, and in the economic role they played. The colonial authorities not only supplied separate facilities for the different races, but did so on discriminatory basis so that the facilities of Asians and Africans were not only grossly inferior to those provided for the Europeans, but were also completely inadequate. The response of the Asians was to supplement these facilities for themselves when they were able to do so <sup>[26]</sup>.

One of the poor services that Indians and Africans received from the Europeans was to deal with land. A lot of land challenges

were experienced by both the Indians and Africans due to the land policies put in place by the Europeans. To start with, East African land where the three groups of people settled was purely for the Africans. However, the Europeans as rulers put in place land policies that favoured them and disadvantaged both the Indians and Africans. George stresses that the trickle of British settlers that arrived in the Protectorate (Kenya) in 1906 began to campaign against Indian settlement in the highland area most conducive to agricultural development <sup>[27]</sup>. With such kind of a campaign by the Europeans, Land was now firmly in the hands of the British especially that in the previous year the Protectorate had been handed over to the Colonial Office, which indicated that no non-European would be given land in the Highlands <sup>[28]</sup>.

With racial policies on land imposed on the Indians, especially those in Kenya, it must be mentioned that by 1939 most of them were concentrated in towns rather than in the highlands where they could have lived more productive lives. Since they were restricted to towns, the major economic activity they did was trade. This meant that Indians who wanted to engage in mining and farming activities were denied chance of involving themselves in such economic activities. George expands this view by elaborating that:

By 1939 the Indian population had grown to about 50,000, despite the fact that more had left the colony than immigrated between 1931-3 and 1939. The average annual figure for immigration between 1931 and 1945 was 475 Europeans and 332 Indians. Due to land laws, the vast majority of the Indian population was concentrated in the towns and most of the retail trade was firmly in their hands. The major export crops of coffee and sisal remained in the hands of the Europeans <sup>[29]</sup>.

Unlike those in Kenya, Indians in Uganda lived a better kind of life due to less land restrictions. The reason behind the absence of land restrictions was the absence of any significant European settler population. George alludes to the fact that Uganda's low humidity, mainly because of being situated to the north of Lake Victoria, contributed to the absence of white settler communities <sup>[30]</sup>. With the absence of white settler communities in the area, the Indians and Africans who lived in Uganda lived better lives because there were less land policies that were put in place. Ghai and Ghai have broadened this view by stating that in Tanganyika and Uganda the land was deemed to be held in trust for the Africans <sup>[31]</sup>.

Apart from land restrictions, the other aspect of life in East Africa where the role of British policies towards the racial differences between two communities was highly experience was in education. Just as it was in other parts of the world that were under the flag of the British, East Africa also had many racial challenges in the education sector. Both Indians and Africans received second class services in education. Not limited to poor infrastructure, the two communities were given less privileges to progress to higher education. Moreover, the curriculum they followed was not as good as the one followed by the Europeans. Indians and Africans were given basic literacy and numeracy

<sup>22</sup>R.C. Thurnwald, *Black and White in East Africa* (London: Routledge, 1935), p. 283.

<sup>23</sup>Krishna, *History of Migration and Contributions of Indian Women in Zambia*, pp. 639-640.

<sup>24</sup>Krishna, *History of Migration and Contributions of Indian Women in Zambia*, p. 640.

<sup>25</sup>Ghai and Ghai, *the Asian Minorities of East and Central*, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup>Ghai and Ghai, *the Asian Minorities of East and Central*, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup>George, *Asians in East Africa*, p. 15.

<sup>28</sup>George, *Asians in East Africa*, p. 15.

<sup>29</sup>George, *Asians in East Africa*, p. 21.

<sup>30</sup>George, *Asians in East Africa*, p. 25.

<sup>31</sup>Ghai and Ghai, *the Asian Minorities of East and Central*, p. 9.

skills far much lower than the ones given to the Europeans. Due to the many challenges encountered in the education sector, the Indians, especially those in Kenya, had to supplement the educational services offered by the British. George illustrates that the education of Indian children in Kenya during these years was conducted mainly in Indian-owned schools, grant-aided by the Government, which imposed a non-African education tax. For higher education, India was usually the choice<sup>[32]</sup>.

Expanding the challenges faced by both Indians and Africans in relation with European education and other policies, Ghai and Ghai posit that:

Members of the three different races were forced to go to different schools and lived in different localities, unable to share social and cultural amenities, and it is not surprising that they remained ignorant of one another's customs, needs and aspirations. The legacy of British imperialism was thus one of racial suspicion and misunderstandings, of antagonism rather than co-operation<sup>[33]</sup>.

Ghai and Ghai's point of view is valid in the sense that the European policy on education where Indians and Africans could not share the same schools made the three groups of people not to know each other well because there was no close interaction in schools. Therefore, without interaction between the Indians and Africans on one side and the Europeans on the other side, there developed suspicion between the two groups. Cardinal it is to mention that the Europeans deliberately introduced racial educational policies in East Africa to make the Indians and Africans feel and believe that they were of inferior races.

To ensure that the Indians were reduced and humiliated as an inferior race, the Europeans put in place some policies that did not allow them to actively participate in politics. Ghai and Ghai outline that:

The Asians were not allowed to actively participate in politics. Till the last phase of colonial rule, there was explicit Asian political representation in the legislative institutions at the national and local levels only in East Africa. And in Kenya Asians were allowed the franchise only on their own communal roll<sup>[34]</sup>.

Restricting Indians from being involved in active politics was a strategy employed by the Europeans because the Europeans knew that Indians, if left without any racial political restrictions, would aid Africans to fight for their independence. Hence, to ensure that Africans did not have any dreams of being independent one day, the British imposed on both the Indians and Africans some racial political policies that prohibited them from engaging themselves in active politics.

Economically policies that championed racism were also introduced for the Indians and Africans. The British, just like they did in India, introduced policies that contributed to a kind of dependency economy that still exists in most, if not all, African

countries. In East Africa, the British introduced policies that made the area poor by looting its raw materials which were taken to Britain to produce finished products. After finished products were made from African raw materials, they were sent to Africa where they were sold at exorbitant prices. Krishna stresses that: Colonial policies discouraged local manufacturing to the preserve of African markets for goods produced in European factories; consequently, African countries became raw materials suppliers and finished goods consumers. As such, colonial governance devoted to building the infrastructure—roads and ports required to facilitate the support of raw materials<sup>[35]</sup>.

The above situation that was obtaining in Africa was exactly the same as what was in India under the British flag. The British made sure that India was only a source of raw materials, production of finished goods was done in Britain. Krishna bemoans this kind of economic policy when she says that the Indian sub-continent was ruled by the British imperialist for around 190 years, and under colonial rule, it followed a non-industrial model. However, many Indian scholars believe that progress was stunted by this model. It was believed that true economic progress lay in industrialisation<sup>[36]</sup> Krishna argues against the above economic system by stating that:

This dismal state of affairs creates a cycle of perpetual dependency, leaving African countries reliant on the export of raw products, which exposes them to exogenous shocks, such as falling European demands. Without the presence of strong industries in Africa to add value to raw materials, foreign buyers still dictate and manipulate the price of these materials to the great disadvantage of African's economy, and its people at large<sup>[37]</sup>.

From the above illustrations, it is true to indicate that British economic policies both on India and East Africa were meant to destroy the economies of the two, India and East Africa. This is because India and Africa were not given chance to industrialise, instead they were made to become sources of raw materials. In situations where local industries were doing well, the British suffocated them to an extent where some of them completely died. Krishna highlights that the economic situation under the British rule was very poor. The British policy towards cottage industries in India, for example, brought most of the factories to near shut down. Farmers were forced to grow cash crops that contributed to hunger<sup>[38]</sup>. Krishna adds that Africa is abundantly endowed with natural resources, including many industrial minerals and agricultural resources. The continent remains poor in spite of its richness in natural resources because they are exported mainly in primary form, with little or no local value addition<sup>[39]</sup>. East Africa also had the same situation where Africans were forced to grow cash crops which contributed to a lot of hunger in the area. This is supported by George who suggests that the Indians were given to control sugar and cotton production in Uganda<sup>[40]</sup>.

<sup>32</sup>George, *Asians in East Africa*, 27.

<sup>33</sup>Ghai and Ghai, *The Asian Minorities of East and Central*, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup>Ghai and Ghai, *The Asian Minorities of East and Central*, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup>Kamini Krishna, 'The Future of Industries in Zambia: A New Drive to India's Engagement with Zambia until 2012', *Journal of Humanities*, Vol. 13, 2014/2015, p. 90.

<sup>36</sup>Krishna, 'The Future of Industries in Zambia', p. 96.

<sup>37</sup>Krishna, 'The Future of Industries in Zambia: A New Drive to India's Engagement with Zambia until 2012', *Journal of Humanities*, Vol. 13, 2014/2015, p. 91.

<sup>38</sup> Krishna, *History of Migration and Contributions of Indian Women in Zambia*, p. 639.

<sup>39</sup>Kamini Krishna, *India's Flourishing Relations with Southern Africa in 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Mauritius: Scholars' Press, 2018), p. 48.

<sup>40</sup>George, *Asians in East Africa*, p. 26.

### British desire on both sides of Indian Ocean

Many historians have labored investigating the reasons behind the British policy of imperialism. It must come out here that the main motivating factor behind the British desire to control both side of the Indian Ocean was economic. The British wanted to exploit raw material both in India and Africa hence colonising the areas. Hosea explains that Europe was driven outwards not by wealth but by poverty.<sup>41</sup> George expands this view by stating that: The extension of British rule in East Africa may appear to a casual observer to have been the curious result of many fortuitous circumstances. The British themselves rather fancy the notion that acquisition of vast territorial powers was indeed carried out in a 'fit of absentmindedness'. But it is now obvious that whatever may have been the individual hesitations and doubts, the broad outflow of British influence was an inevitable as a spring tide, impelled as it was by industrial expansion, wealthy and pride.<sup>42</sup>

Following the industrial revolution that took place in Europe starting in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, European countries had to embrace an aggressive economic and political policy where they brought a number of countries both in Asia and Africa under their control. This was done to enable them get as much raw materials as they needed in order for them to produce finished goods in Europe. John broadens this view by stating that:

Britain before 1985 had no serious commercial or national interest in East Africa, except for two reasons. Firstly, she wished to abolish the slave trade centred on Zanzibar. Secondly, she was concerned with the routes to India. This meant preventing any other European power from controlling the coast of East Africa, and controlling the headwaters of the Nile to protect Egypt.<sup>43</sup>

John adds a new dimension to the fact that Europeans came to colonise both India and East Africa to exploit the minerals available in the two areas. The new dimension is that the British wanted to end slave trade that was very common then in Africa. This reason is applicable to those who came as Christians or missionaries. In addition, John puts it that from 1973 to 1886 Kirk was Consul-General and that it was through his energy that the slave trade was abolished on the east coast; through him British trade was increased to more than half of all Zanzibar's commerce.<sup>44</sup> Ward adds that there were large areas which were empty of people. It was therefore not easy to blame the white men if they thought there was room for their farms as well as for the African villages and their grazing land.<sup>45</sup>

The other reason behind the colonization of East Africa by the British was to find empty land where Indian surplus population could be sent. Gregory highlights that the British rulers hoped to provide an outlet for India's surplus population. The British wanted to provide release for the congested districts of India.<sup>46</sup> The population of India was very high such that the British had to look for free space where India's surplus population could be sent. For example, even as far back as the 1800s, India had a

population of about 200 million people. With such kind of a population, Britain was left with no option but to find land in Africa where the surplus population could be sent.

### Conclusion

This article investigated the role of Indians who were accorded chance by their colonial masters to develop East Africa. It has been noted that Indian societies existed in East Africa before the whites arrived. Indians had been in contact with East Africa due to trade that was taking place between the Indians and Africans. A lot of Indians had settled along the coast and in the interior of Africa long before the coming of the whites. The desire by the whites to control East Africa however increased the numbers of Indians in East Africa as they were needed as labourers during the construction of Kenya-Uganda railway. Apart from working as labourers, some Indians worked as artisans, mechanics, shopkeepers and many more.

The arrival of Indians in East Africa, especially those who were not taken there by the British raised suspicion and jealous among the British. This was because the Indians were doing well in trade, agriculture, mining, and other economic activities. This made the British to start putting in place racial policies that at the end of the day led to the creation of three classes of people in East Africa; the British as rulers, the Indians as developers and the Africans as labourers. There were many social, political and economic policies put in place by the British to ensure that the three groups of people were not at the same level. Finally, the article has examined the British desire on both sides of the Indian Ocean. Economic gain has been discussed as the main motivating factor for the British colonisation of India and East Africa. The other reasons included the desire to end slave trade.

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<sup>41</sup>Hosea Jaffe, *A History of Africa* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1988), p. 43.

<sup>42</sup>George, *Asians in East Africa*, p. 10.

<sup>43</sup>John, D. Anderson, *West and East Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983), p. 298.

<sup>44</sup>John, *West and East Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, p. 298.

<sup>45</sup>W.E.F. Ward, *a History of Africa, Book Three: Central Africa* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1982), p. 79.

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