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Course

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The Significance of the Atlantic World Economy to the Age of Revolutions

The Atlantic World was characterized by interactions between the nations bordering the Atlantic Ocean, which became possible mostly because of the trade (Tomich 10). American silver and gold for money and the consumption of American-produced coffee, tobacco, and sugar were prevalent throughout Europe. Similarly, the increasing population of slaves and the arrival of colonial emigrants changed the environment and agricultural practices of Western Africa and America. The Atlantic world's typical trading patterns were established by the mid-eighteenth century (Tomich 15). By the 19th century, Britain was considered to be the main investment, military, and trading power (Pincus 5). Also, large-scale slavery trade flourished in Africa as European merchants bought young people and exported them to America.

The increased intercontinental trade via the Atlantic led to the growth of the European economies. The transatlantic slave trade began in the 15th century (1450-1600), and it was dominated by the Spanish and the Portuguese (Linebaugh and Rediker 9). Slaves were captured or bought in Africa as the demand for forced labor increased. Native populations in the New World were decimated by deadly diseases brought by the European settlers. Denmark, England, and France accelerated the triangular trade where the European products were exported to African countries in exchange for slaves who were consequently shipped and sold in America (Klooster 15). Afterward, European countries imported the plantation crops produced in the American colonies by slaves. They processed and re-exported them across the Atlantic and the Mediterranean Sea.

The Atlantic world economy, characterized by the triangle trade, led to substantial changes; for instance, major wars or revolutions that disordered the balance of power among trading nations, enforcement of laws or treaties that regulated how the slaves were transported, and the abandonment of highly controlled mercantilism in favor of free trade (Hazard 00:14-01:35).

Besides, the Atlantic world economy led to the rise of slaving families and companies. It expanded due to chattel slavery and other forced labor systems such as the Spanish system of *encomienda* as Europeans needed workforce to exploit their lands (Klooster 15). The Indian slavery system was considered ineffective while the indentured servants from Europe were set free after their term of labor expired, which forced the plantation gentries to capture or buy African through the Atlantic slave trade. The exploitation of human labor through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade created widespread inequality, suffering, and deaths.

Nonetheless, the abolitionist movements fought for the termination of slavery on moral grounds. The last slaving voyage to America was recorded in 1870 (Tomich 23). Evidently, countries that participated in the triangle trade grew and developed quicker as compared to their non-slave trading competitors. Insurrectionists in the Atlantic societies began the anti-colonial struggles, which led to an era of revolutions from the 1770s to the 1820s. The notable revolutions in the Atlantic world include Spanish America (1806–1830), Haiti (1791–1804), France and French-controlled Europe (1789–1814), and United States (1775–1783) (Linebaugh and Rediker 25). The revolutions sought to promote Enlightenment ideals such as individual freedom and rejection of distant aristocratic rulers, kings, and established churches which thrived due to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Besides, the revolutions were linked via networks of international events and trade.

Evidently, the Atlantic world economy catalyzed the successful revolutions which facilitated the end of the slave trade, expansion of Africa colonization by the Europeans, and brought independence to America. Furthermore, the dark sides of the Atlantic world economy led to revolutions that promoted universal principles of republicanism and Enlightenment to ensure people were treated equally. The revolutionary mentalities which were connected by social, political, and economic networks sought to reject rule without representation and challenge the weakness of the Atlantic world economy. Ultimately, the revolutions ended European imperialism in America and the Old Regime in Europe.