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Why Nigerian Agbada Fabric is (often) Imported, While Indian Sari Fabric is Local: A Comparative History of Textile Manufacturing

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Abstract

In the 1980s, both India and Nigeria had textile sectors that satisfied their large domestic demand. Today, however, Nigeria imports most of its textiles, including identity-imbued fabrics, while India is a major textiles producer. This article proposes three explanatory factors for this divergence based on a review of secondary sources. From independence, Indian policy placed greater emphasis on supporting craft and small-scale textile production, whereas the craft sector in Nigeria was neglected. Nigeria's indigenisation of industry strategies failed to achieve endogenous processes in the textile industry, whereas the Indian textile sector was characterised by high Indian ownership and endogenous skills and technologies that rendered the sector resilient to shocks. Lastly, while both countries adopted import-substituting industrialisation strategies, the Nigerian textile sector benefited from little trade protection as smuggling greatly undermined the protection in place.

Keywords: textiles, manufacturing, crafts, industrialisation, identity fabrics, Nigeria, India

Résumé

Dans les années 1980, l'Inde et le Nigeria avaient des secteurs textiles qui satisfaisaient leur importante demande intérieure. Aujourd'hui, cependant, le Nigeria importe la plupart de ses textiles, y compris des tissus identitaires, tandis que l'Inde est un important producteur de textiles. A partir d'une revue de sources secondaires, cet article propose trois facteurs explicatifs de cette différence. Dès l'indépendance, l'Inde a davantage mis l'accent sur le soutien

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à la production artisanale et à petite échelle de textiles, alors que le secteur de l'artisanat au Nigeria était négligé. Les stratégies nigérianes de l'indigénisation industrielle n'ont pas abouti aux processus endogènes dans l'industrie textile, tandis que le secteur textile indien était caractérisé par une forte proportion d'industriels locaux et des compétences et technologies endogènes permettant au secteur de résister aux chocs. Enfin, les deux pays ont adopté des stratégies d'industrialisation de substitution aux importations, mais le secteur textile nigérian a bénéficié de peu de protection commerciale car la contrebande a affaibli considérablement les protections en vigueur.

Mots-clés : textile, fabrication, artisanat, industrialisation, tissus identitaires, Nigeria, Inde

Introduction

Globalisation has led to the increasing uniformisation of dress across the world with widespread adoption of Western-style clothing. Some countries, however, still maintain a significant level of non-Western dress. India and Nigeria are among these: both countries are famous for weddings with prominent displays of local wear and their leaders rarely appear in Western dress. Different forms of local dress are often worn with pride as markers of cultural identity. One could expect that demand for identity-imbued dress would be met principally through locally produced fabrics. While this is largely the case in India – saris, salwar kameez and akhan sherwanis are made from made-in-India fabrics – it is generally not the case in Nigeria today, where agbadas, iro and bubas and wedding aso-ebi¹ are often made from imported fabric.

Some handwoven Nigerian fabrics, such as *aso-oke*, and resist-dyed fabrics (*adire*), continue to be produced or processed locally. However, the majority of other fabrics considered as markers of Nigerian, or more widely African, identity, are imported today. These fabrics include wax-print fabrics (called *ankara* in Nigeria), Guinea brocade (also known as *shedda* or *bazin*) and Nigerian lace. These fabrics, considered 'African', have foreign origins,² but in the 1980s, when the Nigerian textile industry was at its peak, all were also being manufactured locally and today some mills still produce these fabrics.

Therefore, from an economic perspective, understanding why Indians use locally produced fabric for their identity wear whereas Nigerians rely largely on imported fabric is an issue of understanding the history of textile manufacturing in the two countries. This article uses comparative historical analysis to identify factors that enabled the Indian industry to satisfy its large domestic demand, and those that fragilised Nigeria's industry, leaving its textile market flooded by imports. The period of analysis focuses on the

decades preceding independence – that is, from the 1930s for India and 1940s for Nigeria – to the 1990s, the decade in which Indian and Nigerian textile performances markedly started to diverge. The article starts by presenting the study methodology and justification for a comparison between India and Nigeria. This is followed by a brief overview of the history of textile manufacturing in the two countries. The three sections that follow explore explanatory factors for the divergence in Indian and Nigerian textilemanufacturing trajectories: the first concerns synergies between craft and industrial manufacturing; the second, the level of endogenisation in the textile sector; and the third, the possibility to effectively limit importation of textiles.

Methodology

The comparative analysis uses mainly secondary sources. A limited number of interviews were carried out in Nigeria to confirm and complement findings from the literature.³ There is a vast literature on Indian textile history and a growing body of literature on the Nigerian experience. The latter literature has identified an array of reasons explaining the decline of a once-flourishing Nigerian textile industry. Some explanations, such as poor electricity supply driving up production costs, are not explored further here (Muhammad et al. 2018; Maiwada and Renne 2013; Banjoko, Iwuji and Bagshaw 2012; Aminu 2016). This article focuses instead on factors that can be more fully fleshed out through qualitative comparison.

The article ascribes to the new comparative economic history approach, which posits that economic processes are best understood by systematically comparing experiences across time and countries (Hatton, O'Rourke and Taylor 2007). In his comparative study of how nations cope with crisis, Jared Diamond quips: 'Those who study just one country end up understanding no country' (Diamond 2019: 13). Indeed, comparison offers new perspectives. Nevertheless, a comparative approach has limitations: it cannot attain the same depth of knowledge as when working on a single country. With this in mind, this article, which may be the first in the literature to directly compare Nigerian and Indian textile experiences, has the modest ambition of highlighting a few salient explanatory factors and the hope of spurring further research.

The study adopted an inductive approach, focused on identifying factors that were present in India's relatively successful trajectory, and less present or absent in Nigeria's, or vice versa, as a way of bringing a fresh perspective to explanations of Nigeria's textile failure. The analysis pointed to explanatory variables from the broad realm of economic nationalism, and

the article focuses on three non-mutually exclusive facets. Given the array of definitions and interpretations of economic nationalism,⁴ fleshing out the different facets has the utility of helping refine and nuance the concept of economic nationalism.

The case selection was based on the strategic commonalities that India and Nigeria presented. Nigeria was also singled out for its status as an exemplary case of the failure of textile industrialisation in West Africa. If any country should have a thriving textile industry in the region, it should be Nigeria. India and Nigeria are among the most populous countries on their continents, and while India's population may be roughly ten times that of Nigeria, the latter has since independence, at least, represented a significant consumer market.⁵ Kilby (1969) estimated that the Nigerian market was large enough for the establishment of a large-scale textile mill as early as the 1890s, when an estimated 8 million yards of cloth were traded. Thin domestic markets have therefore not constrained textile development in either country. Both countries, at independence from Britain, also had high levels of poverty and a largely illiterate population. One can suppose thus that both countries faced similar constraints in terms of consumer income and a modern skilled workforce.

Table 1: India and Nigeria - General Indicators

		endence (or earliest railable year)	1990		
	India	Nigeria	India	Nigeria	
D 1 (111:)	376	45	072	05	
Population (million)	(1950)	(1960)	873	95	
GNI per capita	90	100	380	5(0	
(US\$)	(1962)	(1962)		560	
A J14 1:4	120/		48%	55%	
Adult literacy rate	12%	_	(1991)	(1991)	

Sources: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division; Macrotrends.net (data sourced from World Bank); UNESCO Institute of Statistics

The most salient reason for comparing the two, however, is their textile history, and notably the shared sequence of strong precolonial textile manufacturing, disruption by European powers from about the seventeenth century, and a resurgence of textile manufacturing post-independence based on nationalist import-substitution strategies. This sequence is presented in the section that follows.

Overview of Textile Manufacturing History in India and Nigeria

Prior to the seventeenth century, it can be said that the Indian subcontinent clothed the world: South Asia accounted for approximately a quarter of global textile output (Riello and Roy 2009). India's highly competitive handloom weaving industry produced quality cottons that seduced European markets to such an extent that manufacturers there lobbied for protection. British manufacturers obtained this in the 1701 Calico Act and renewed legislation in 1721, severely restricting imports of Indian textiles for the domestic market (but allowing them for re-export elsewhere, Gupta 2013). Indian textiles were also widely sold in Africa, both on the Indian Ocean coast and indirectly to West Africa (Inikori 2009; Machado 2009). To counter Indian textiles, European powers implemented the first import-substitution industrialisation (ISI) strategies, closing their markets to Indian textiles to consolidate their own industries. By the mid-nineteenth century, Britain's textile industry had upstaged India as the centre of global textile manufacturing, and India started importing textiles from its coloniser.

Nigerian textiles did not play as prominent a role in global markets and its textile history is not as well documented as India's. However, the region that would become Nigeria had several hubs of skilled textile manufacturing, notably the Yoruba kingdoms, the Igbo areas and the Hausa states. The Yoruba produced specialised cloths - aso-ado, or Benin cloths - specifically for export to the Benin kingdom prior to the arrival of Europeans in the fifteenth century. In the initial phase of trade with Europe, European traders operated as carriers exporting aso-ado to present-day Ghana. Between 1644 and 1646, for example, Dutch traders exported 16,000 pieces of aso-ado to the Gold Coast (Inikori 2009). In the Hausa regions, under the preseventeenth-century trans-Saharan trade, textiles from Borno were traded to North Africa, the Middle East and even Europe (Falola and Heaton 2008). The Kano indigo textile industry was particularly renowned in the nineteenth century. In 1851, European traveller H. Barth extolled the virtues of Kano as an excellent centre of textile production and estimated cloth sales at an equivalent of £60,000 per year (Onyeiwu 1997; Shea 2006).

European textile imports arrived in West Africa earlier than in India as they became an essential exchange commodity in the transatlantic slave trade (Hopkins 2019). Textile imports steadily increased from the seventeenth century, and initially these were largely composed of Indian textiles, reexported by European traders. But as European industries matured, European textiles came to dominate, including significant quantities of white bast fabric. For the period 1880 to 1892, textiles averaged 44 per cent of the total imports that arrived in Lagos (Hopkins 2019: 179), and during

the colonial period textiles remained the single leading import, accounting for a quarter of imports in British West Africa (Hopkins 2019: 229).

In addition to seeking ready markets for its textiles, Britain tried to make its colonies a source of raw cotton to feed its textile industry. The British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA) was formed in 1902 to promote the supply of cotton from British colonies. During an earlier cotton crisis in the 1860s, Britain had turned to India, but challenges with securing supplies there had led Britain to focus on African colonies, including Nigeria. However, in Nigeria too, the BCGA had challenges and was frequently outcompeted by local weavers who offered higher prices for raw cotton than British industry was willing to pay (Onyeiwu 2000). Nonetheless, Nigerian weavers felt the burden of their supply of local cotton being diverted from them probably more strongly than their Indian counterparts.

Although Britain has been blamed for the demise of Indian and Nigerian textile production, finer analyses show that pockets of local manufacturing survived. Textile manufacturers in both countries maintained markets for high-quality luxury cloths that were too specific and difficult to reproduce industrially (Kriger 2006; Hopkins 2019; Roy 2013, 2020). On the one hand, there was a decline in demand for luxury cloths: domestic demand in India for luxuries of all kinds declined greatly with the demise of Moghul aristocrats under British colonialism (Maddison 1971), and Nigerian producers lost their historic West African export markets to European competition (Inikori 2009; Kriger 2006). On the other hand, specific tastes for certain luxury fabrics protected some markets from imports. Moreover, new pockets of demand arose: in Nigeria, farmers who grew rich from the palm oil trade stimulated the growth of *akwete* and *adire* cloths, for instance (Kriger 2006). Thus, locally produced textiles survived throughout the colonial period.

In the lead up to independence, efforts to relaunch local textile manufacturing stepped up. Both countries adopted ISI strategies that initially resulted in thriving textile manufacturing sectors. The textile sector represented the largest employment sector after agriculture in India (Kar 2015) and the largest formal sector employer after government in Nigeria. In 1984, when the Nigerian textile industry was at its peak, there were 175 textile factories, and the sector accounted for 22 per cent of employment and 15 per cent of manufacturing value (Muhammad et al. 2018; Onyeiwu 1997).

In the 1980s, both countries faced significant challenges. The highly regulated textile industry in India showed pockets of poor capability and high cost (Roy 1998) and the country as a whole faced a foreign exchange crisis (Ramesh 2017). Nonetheless, the industry continued to satisfy domestic demand for textiles. A Ministry of Textiles was established in 1983

to spearhead sectoral reform that initially focused on deregulating the sector, and then from 1991, a trade liberalisation programme – emphasising export promotion more than import liberalisation – was progressively embarked upon. Textile exports to the rest of the world rose (Ghosh 2000; Roy 1998; Kar 2015). Rodrik and Subramanian's (2005) analysis of Indian growth in the 1990s emphasises how it was the bases laid under preceding decades of ISI that enabled manufacturing growth in the 1990s. Nigeria, for its part was hit by falling oil prices from 1983. Foreign exchange reserves fell and imports of capital goods necessary for textile manufacturing became scarce, while the general economic crisis exacerbated infrastructural constraints, such as electricity supply. The textile industry started contracting from 1985 and in the 1990s declined rapidly.

There are thus several commonalities in the textile trajectories of India and Nigeria, until the 1990s, when their trajectories diverge: India's textile resurgence following colonial disruption continued, whereas Nigeria's textile industry declined. The pair thus constitute fertile ground for comparison. Nonetheless, there are some differences to keep in mind. The first concerns the scale of India's past textile experience, in particular with regards to export markets. As mentioned, precolonial India clothed the world. Indian textile producers and merchants had extensive experience catering to a variety of tastes in overseas markets in the precolonial period. Postcolonial India could thus reactivate a much larger reserve of technical and marketing expertise in the textile sector than Nigeria could. The second – linked somewhat to the first – is that India started modern industrialisation earlier than Nigeria. The pre-existence of significant merchant classes probably facilitated the earlier emergence of local capitalists in India (Roy 2013). The first modern textile mill was established in 1854 by a local entrepreneur, and by 1875 another fifty mills had opened (Kar 2015). Nigeria's first modern mill, Kaduna Textile Mill, opened in 1956, a full century after India.

With these caveats in mind, I explore three explanatory factors of the divergence in Indian and Nigerian textile manufacturing trajectories.

Small-scale Textile Manufacturing: The Missing Link in Nigeria

A striking feature of India's textile manufacturing is the long-term prominence of handloom weaving and an intermediate form of manufacturing, powerloom weaving.⁶ Under colonial India, handloom weaving continued to engage a third of India's industrial workforce (Roy 2013) and accounted for 25 per cent of cotton cloth produced in 1901 (Roy 2010). The handloom sector particularly catered to the market for specific identity-imbued sari fabrics.

The powerloom sector developed organically at the turn of the twentieth century, when handloom manufacturing, initially largely home-based and organised around family units, evolved into more productive, yet still small, wage-based workshops giving rise to a 'weaver capitalist' class (Haynes 2001; Roy 2010, 2013). Weaver capitalists were more willing to take risks involved in innovating and upgrading and they drove the adoption of powerlooms that resembled semi-automatic handlooms but used electrical power. At a time when several large mills were discarding looms as scrap to adopt newer technologies, weaver capitalists bought up these looms cheaply and modified them. The first weaver-owned powerloom factories were typically small, with most having between ten and twenty powerlooms, sometimes installed in weavers' homes. These factories represented a considerable jump in productivity, with powerlooms able to produce up to four times the number of saris as handlooms in a day (Haynes 2001). By 1940, there were 15,000 powerlooms in operation (Haynes 2001; Roy 2010). Like the handloom sector, powerloom manufacturers initially specialised in special forms of sari fabric.

While the initial growth of the small-scale sector occurred mostly organically, from 1947 government pursued policy that deliberately favoured the sector. The concern that large industrial mills should not enter into competition with the handloom sector, an important purveyor of employment in a labour-surplus country, appeared in policy debates from 1932 (Mazumdar 1991). Another logic that guided policy was that investment resources should be primarily devoted to heavy industry (including capital goods), whereas demand for consumer goods should initially be met through existing capacity in the small-scale sector, until the capital-goods sector became capable of providing machinery for consumer-goods manufacturing. Powerloom workshops benefited from policy designed for the handloom sector as long as units had less than five looms (Mazumdar 1984). The 1948 Cotton Textile Order defined a set of products reserved only for small-scale manufacturers and obliged large-scale manufacturers to obtain operating licences. Financial and marketing support schemes were also established for small-scale units. Lastly, small-scale units were exempt from the excise duty paid by large mills (Kar 2015; Mazumdar 1984).

In 1956, restrictions on the physical capacity of mills were put in place: they could now install new looms for export purposes only or to replace old looms, but not to simply increase their capacity (Mazumdar 1984). The one area where large mills were favoured by policy was the spinning sector, for mills were expected to provide yarn to the small-scale sector. Powerlooms often worked closely with large mills – buying yarn from them and sending their grey fabric for dyeing, printing and finishing to mills (Mazumdar 1984).

India's dirigiste policies have been heavily criticised, particularly by economists concerned with India's textile export competitiveness.⁷ The policies are said to have introduced distortions and handicapped large mills. By the 1960s, large mills started running into difficulties, and by the late 1970s, more than a hundred mills had gone bankrupt – the government had to establish a scheme to nationalise 'sick mills' (Mazumdar 1984; Ghosh 2000). The 1982–83 Bombay Textile Strike killed off several more mills (Roy 2020). Mills that remained operational were hampered in their efforts to modernise or diversify into export markets.

However, from an import-substituting perspective, India's policy did its job and attained self-sufficiency in the textile market (Kar 2015; Ganesh 2002). A wide variety of Indian-made fabrics were available in the domestic market. Indians were employed in both the small- and large-scale sector, although wages in the former have been estimated as being typically half of the latter (Mazumdar 1984; Haynes 2001), and overall employment in the textile sector grew continuously from the 1970s to 1991, even as India faced its sick mill problem (Roy 1998). Furthermore, India exported textiles throughout the period, albeit probably at a much slower rate than would have been possible with a more vibrant mill sector. Haynes (2001) and Tewari (2006) also emphasise how the small size of powerloom units enabled them to maintain the flexibility of craft production. Unlike methods of mass production, small units could adjust production to small, regional patterns of demand and adapt quickly to changing markets. When large mills died off en masse in the 70s and 80s, powerloom units successfully stepped in (Roy 2020).

Indian policymakers reacted to the increasing strains in the textile sector from 1985 by relaxing regulations on the mill sector, and from 1991 liberalisation was progressively pursued to strengthen export performance. India's 1992–1997 Development Plan foresaw the mill sector concentrating on the production of textiles for export, while the powerloom sector was to cater to the domestic market (Ghosh 2000). In 1995 the share of powerlooms in total textile production in India was still high, at 68 per cent (Haynes 2001).

To sum up, we see that continuity of a craft tradition enabled endogenous transformation, resulting in a more productive yet still flexible intermediate scale of production that catered well to identity-fabrics and made the textile sector more resilient to shocks. What continuity was there between craft and industrial textile production in Nigeria?

The literature on craft textile manufacturing in Nigeria is sparser. Various woven fabrics, such as *aso-oke*, *akwete*, *ofi*, *sanyan* (wild silk cloth) and *saki*,

continued to be produced locally after disruption from European imports (Maiwada, Dutsenwai and Waziri 2012). In addition, resist-dyed *adire* cloth continued to be produced, although from the 1930s local fabric and indigo dyes were replaced by imported white bast fabric and chemical dyes (Kriger 2006). Prior to independence, some of the production of *adire* cloth was being exported to Ghana and Senegal (Kriger 2006). Estimates of the scale of craft manufacturing around independence include: 2 million pounds of imported yarn processed and 50 million square yards of cloth produced by artisans in 1962 (Onyeiwu 1997), accounting for 8 per cent of textiles on the domestic market that year (Hopkins 2019); and 12 per cent of cloth sales coming from handwoven cloths in 1966 (Bray 1969 cited in Austin 2013). Figures for later years are hard to come by to assess how the share of craft textiles progressed after independence.

The literature mentions a few innovations in textile craft manufacturing, but none that seem of sufficient import to have enabled significant increases in productivity. A 1966 study (cited in Austin 2013) on aso-oke manufacturers in Iseyin found no evidence of wage workers; family labour still prevailed. A study thirty years later (Renne 1997) found that aso-oke weaving workshops in five Yoruba towns had much lower productivity (75 per cent lower!) than the 1966 Iseyin weavers. Two craft production studies (O'Hear 1987; Renne 1997) both mention weavers staying in the profession only for lack of better opportunities, as income derived from weaving was low. From the 1960s, weaving cooperatives were set up, with mitigated success (Akinbogun and Ogunduyile 2009; O'Hear 1987). Although wage labour in craft weaving certainly existed in the period under study, at what level it existed cannot be ascertained. What is certain is that there is little evidence of a weaver capitalist class such that drove productivity gains in the artisanal sector in India.

There was thus little organic upgrading of craft textile manufacturing in Nigeria; there was also little in terms of structured support to the sector. The most significant government initiative was a colonial scheme, which had disappointing results. After the Second World War, colonial policy paid greater attention to developing local industries in Nigeria and in 1946 the Textile Development Scheme was launched (Renne 1997). Eight textile centres were established with the mission of investigating local textile production methods and introducing improved methods. Technologies such as the broad handloom and the hand-carding machine were introduced and local carpenters were trained in their manufacture. Why did the scheme have so little impact? Accounts highlight that the scheme was also an initiative to generate employment for ex-servicemen who had fought for

Britain. These had little interest in weaving, and were seeking white-collar government jobs as textile trainers instead. Few to none of the trainees went on to set up their own business (Onyeiwu 1997; Oladejo and Suberu 2016; Renne 1997). From 1954, the initiative fizzled out. The Textile Research and Advisory Centre set up under the scheme closed down in 1957, as did the Mechanical Training Centre that trained loom mechanics (Kilby 1969).

There were some examples of entrepreneurs willing to take innovation risks, but it is not clear if these entrepreneurs came from a weaving background. At least five locally owned powerloom units were established between 1940 and 1950 with support from the colonial government (Onyeiwu 1997). These units were much larger than the average powerloom units we saw emerging in weavers' homes in India, with each installing (or planning to install) up to sixty second-hand powerlooms. The fate of these pioneer medium-scaled factories is unclear. Onyeiwu (1997) notes that none of these mills survived beyond the 1950s, whereas Kilby (1969) states that one was still operating in 1964. The difficulties that befell the units included: looms getting damaged during transit; a lack of technical and managerial expertise (training had focused only on handlooms and not powerlooms); and the refusal of the Colonial Loans Board to renew loans. Further research into the fortunes of these factories would be useful to better understand the 'missing middle' of flexible yet productive smallscale manufacturers in Nigeria.

After independence, there was a lack of attention to craft textile manufacturing, with little industrial research undertaken to upgrade the sector (Adu, Ajayi and Aremu, 2018; Okoduwa 2007; Ajayi 2009).8 Although the Federal Institute for Industrial Research was established in 1956 with instructions to 'pay particular attention to design of products for small-scale industry' (Schatz 1977: 58), the impact of this and other small-scale industry initiatives on the textile sector were limited. Nationalist fervour at independence placed an emphasis on large-scale industrial projects (Ohiorhenuan and Poloamina 1992). Indigenous skills and technologies were not articulated with new imported technologies. Austin (2013) remarks that technologies used in craft weaving, and in other indigenous industries such as iron smelting, were distinct from those used in factories in the same industry, and highlights that generally for West Africa there was little direct carry-over in personnel and skill formation in the sense of entrepreneurs or workers moving directly from old forms of manufacturing to new industrial forms.

Nigerian textile development thus, in contrast to India's, did not give prominence to small-scale manufacturing. Economic nationalism does not

necessarily imply a focus on craft manufacture. Nationalist industrialisers, such as South Korea and China, also favoured large-scale textile manufacturing at the expense of craft production. Thus, the issue at hand is not necessarily the choice of large-scale versus small-scale production. However, in the specific context of Nigeria, the failure to have capitalised on and upgraded traditional textile skills and technologies resulted in a lost opportunity to capture a naturally protected market of identity fabrics. The Indian experience shows how small-scale producers were instrumental in satisfying demand for identity fabrics shielded from import competition by local preferences. Similar preferences existed in in Nigeria.¹⁰ One paper mentions machine-woven asooke manufactured in China not finding willing buyers in Nigeria because it was not handwoven (Adu et al. 2018). Had there been significant productivity gains in craft manufacturing, this potential could have been better exploited. Nigeria's policy neglect of textile crafts left less room for indigenous skills to be used productively, and as we will see in the next section it also contributed to limited endogenous processes in Nigeria's textile industry.

Endogenous Processes in the Textile Sector: Ownership and Technology

Endogenous growth theory emphasises endogenous rather than exogenous forces as drivers of growth. This section examines two elements that can influence endogenous processes and that are often part of economic nationalism strategies: the ownership of industry and the ownership of technology. On the first issue, whether industry is predominantly locally owned or foreign owned has important consequences for how effective skills transfer is. On the second, the capacity to produce technology, or at least to master technology, is necessary for an innovative and resilient sector. It is all the more so if pre-existing indigenous technologies and skills have been neglected, as with the craft textile sector in Nigeria. Significant divergences between India and Nigeria are observed on the two criteria.

The Indian literature dwells little on foreign participation in industrial textile mills, and as we saw in the preceding section, the small-scale sector was driven by local weaver capitalists. The first textile mills were set up by Indian entrepreneurs, and while some sectors of the economy, such as shipping and banking, prior to independence were highly dependent on British capital and firms, in the pioneer Bombay textile industry most of the capital was Indian. Technical and managerial skills for the industrial sector were also acquired progressively by Indians: in 1895, 42 per cent of managerial and supervisory staff of textile mills were British; by 1925 this had fallen to 28 per cent (Maddison 1971).

India's extensive historical experience in textile manufacturing and trade may have facilitated early endogenisation of the textile industrial sector. However, endogenisation also resulted from ideologies that deliberately shaped policy. India's long independence struggle was imbued with a strong current of economic nationalism. The debates on independence profoundly questioned the direction that Indian development should pursue. Gandhi stressed that the 'imitation of English economics' would cause the 'ruin' of India: the idea that India's national development would founder on industrialisation was recurrent, appearing more than half a century before independence (Klein 1973). An 1891 article from the Calcutta Bangavasi attacked industrialisation because it would require the import of machines. Perhaps with great foresight, the article warned that 'machine civilisation' would also require the import of the 'practical energy and innovative genius of the English people' (Klein 1973: 96). The anti-industrialists did not win outright, but what prevailed was a determination to be self-sufficient in industry and revive indigenous craft industries. The Swadeshi movement for independence was galvanised around these ideas. On a practical level, the Swadeshi movement also involved a boycott of British products, facilitating import substitution.

The influence of the Swadeshi movement on India's first textile policy is visible in the emphasis placed on the handloom sector, as well as in the wider policy objective of ensuring self-sufficiency in machinery to enable production of consumer goods. Foreign participation in industry was kept deliberately low after independence. Complex controls were used to circumscribe the role of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the economy. Among developing countries, India was among those that received the least amount of FDI until the 1970s, and this did not change significantly until liberalisation in 1991. The textile sector in 1980 drew only 3.4 per cent of a relatively small FDI stock (Sharma 2000). Even under liberalisation, segments of the textile industry remained closed to foreign investment. Overall, India's textile development, including its textile exports, have been dominated by domestic firms (Tewari 2006).

In terms of technology, we saw in the previous section how the organic development of the powerloom sector allowed for local mastery of machinery in the small-scale sector. This was complemented by the focus on developing the capital-goods sector, which meant that machinery and skills were locally available also for the mill sector, although all sectors to some extent imported machinery. However, when technological constraints are mentioned in the literature, these arise from investment controls on the mill sector, which hindered the upgrading of technology, rather than from a lack of skills to

manage or repair machinery. The ultimate sign of the endogenous mastery of textile technology is perhaps the fact that Indians have exported their textile skills across the world, and particularly in Africa, including Nigeria, where several textile industries are run by Indian expatriates.

The prevalence of foreign owners and managers, and the dependence on foreign machinery, by contrast, are common themes in the literature on Nigerian textile development (Ohiorhenuan and Poloamina 1992; Onyeiwu 1997; Oyejide et al. 2013; Pessu and Agboma 2018; Banjoko et al. 2012). Nigeria's independence fighters did not have as coherent and focused a vision for Nigeria's development as a nation as the Indian Swadeshi movement figures did. Nigeria's independence struggle was shorter than India's, which perhaps afforded Nigerians less time to consolidate their nationalist vision and strategy. Independence led to the adoption of an ISI strategy, like India. However, the Achilles heel of Nigeria's ISI was that the industries developed were far from self-sufficient. The post-independence textile industry was dependent on foreign expertise, imported machinery and, at certain moments, even on imported cotton and yarn.

The goal of increasing Nigerian participation in industry transpired in policy papers as early as 1949, but was not followed by concrete measures until the 1970s (Schatz 1977). 'Indigenisation' was an explicit goal in Nigeria's Second Development Plan, 1970–74¹³ and was operationalised through the 1972 Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree, which limited foreign participation in defined economic sectors. Textiles were not on the initial restricted list, but the 1977 amendment to the decree limited foreign equity-holding in the textile sector to 60 per cent (Banjoko et al. 2012; Onyeiwu 1997). The goals of indigenisation policy, however, were thwarted by cheating, with Nigerian nationals acting as fronts or holding empty positions in textile firms (Schatz 1977; Banjoko et al. 2012; interviews). The scheme was dismantled under the structural adjustment programme and replaced with fiscal incentives for pioneer industries in 1986.

Table 2 shows the percentage of foreign equity of seven first-generation textile mills in Nigeria at start-up. On average, Nigerian equity accounted for less than a third of total equity, and was mostly provided by regional governments. Recent analyses of Nigeria's textile sector still raise the issue of foreign ownership: a 2013 study characterised the industry as having a disproportionate level of foreign ownership (Oyejide et al. 2013); a 1992 analysis highlighted the high number of foreigners on textile company boards and in technical positions (Ohiorhenuan and Poloamina 1992); and a 1989 analysis of ownership by textile subsector showed levels of Nigerian ownership per major sector ranging from just 11 per cent to 34 per cent (Table 3).

Mill	Kaduna Textiles Ltd (1958)	Nigerian Textile Mills (1962)	Norspin (1963)	Nortex (1963)	Aba Textile Mills (1964)	Arewa (1964)	United Nige- rian Textiles (1964)	Textile Printers of Nigeria (1965)
% of foreign equity	33%	70%	93%	53%	76%	60%*	100%	84%
Main foreign shareholder nationality	British	Swiss	Anglo- Dutch	Suda- nese	Indian	Japa- nese	Hong- Kong	Anglo- Dutch

Table 2: Share of equity held by foreign shareholders in early textile mills

Source: adapted from Kilby 1969:120

^{*} The International Finance Corporation held 16% equity, so, a total non-Nigerian equity of 76%.

Table 3: Ownership	of Nigerian	cotton mills b	y nationality in 1989
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Textile sub-sector	Nigerians	Chinese	Indians	Lebanese	Others
Spinning					
ring	34%	36%	13%	6%	11%
rotor*	19%	7%	31%	36%	6%
Weaving					
shuttle	28%	46%	17%	0%	10%
shuttleless*	11%	0%	63%	13%	13%
Knitting	11%	3%	86%	0%	0%

Source: John Short Economic Consultants 1989, cited in Onyeiwu 1997:244

Foreign ownership has hampered Nigeria's textile development in two ways. Firstly, it has exacerbated the lack of synergies between craft and industrial production. An analysis of textile experiences in East Africa concluded that modern factories there displayed little or no synergy with craft producers. Western industrialists were unaccustomed to working with artisans and often ignorant of local artisan heritage (Clarence-Smith 2014). This conclusion applies, at least partially, to Nigeria. While there are some links between craft and textile mills – with weavers sometimes procuring yarn from mills or factories subcontracting orders to craft workshops – little mention of such synergies appears in the literature, and interviews indicate it is a limited practice. One industrialist who reported such collaboration indicated that working with craftworkers in Kano was easier for him as a native than for

^{*} Rotors and shuttleless looms were the best-practice technologies at the time.

foreigners because he knew – and cared about – the craft heritage. Foreign owners face higher transaction costs (language, culture, trust, etc.) working with artisans. Distanced from the industrial sector, Nigerian artisans did not have the opportunities of their Indian counterparts to rub shoulders with new technologies and build up knowledge and confidence to innovate.

Secondly, foreign ownership played a role in limiting endogenous mastery and adaptation of technology in the industrial sector. A case study of how Nigeria's first large mill, Kaduna Textile Mill, was set up concludes that Nigerian participation in the pre-investment stage of the project – feasibility and engineering studies – was 'abysmally low', and yet literature on technical development emphasises how local participation in the pre-investment stage of an industrial project is instrumental in strengthening local technological capabilities (Onyeiwu 1997:239).

With or without foreign investment, technological choices were made that favoured capital intensity over labour intensity (Austin 2013). Policies tended to subsidise the import of capital goods, while the actual manufacture of capital goods was neglected. There were some machinery manufacturing initiatives (in the cement and shoe-manufacturing sectors, for instance), but Nigeria was to a significant extent in the throes of 'machinery merchants' (Kilby 1969). Turnkey factory sales were popular as these capital-intensive projects brought prestige. During the oil boom years, turnkey transplantation continued to be favoured (Chete et al. 2014). Echoing the 1891 Calcutta newspaper's warning, Ohiorhenuan and Poloamina (1992) highlight how the lack of a systematic framework for technology transfer in the 1970s and the continued absence of a capital-goods producing sector led to the continued dependence of industry on imports for machinery and expertise.

Thus, despite post-independence nationalist aspirations, Nigerian policy failed to establish national textile industrialists and to achieve technological autonomy. The dependence of Nigerian industry limited the resilience of the textile sector. When the 1980s oil slump led to foreign-exchange shortages, production at several mills experienced halts because firms could not import spare parts or new equipment. If textile equipment had had a greater endogenous nature, the capacity to repair, if not manufacture, machines would have been in place. Foreign dependence may also have rendered Nigeria more vulnerable to foreign competition: an interviewee cited in one study alleges that several textile firms of Asian ownership, which closed down in the 1980s, relocated to their home countries and, with their knowledge of the Nigerian market, started manufacturing counterfeit 'Made in Nigeria' fabrics to be smuggled into Nigeria (Pessu and Agboma 2018: 618). Smuggling, as we will see in the next section, was a major challenge to Nigerian textile production.

The Possibility of Trade Protection as an Instrument

Trade protection is the most widely recognised tool of economic nationalism. For decades, economic orthodoxy has vilified the role of trade protection in development, but recent work is recalling the crucial role it has played in a myriad of industrialisation success stories (Chang 2009; Rodrik 2017; Soludo, Ogbu and Chang 2004). Both India and Nigeria made frequent use of trade protection measures for their textile sectors. The diagram below shows a continuity of protective barriers - quotas, import licensing, tariffs and even bans – against textile imports from before independence to well into the 2000s after both had become members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). India has a reputation as one of the most protectionist countries in the world (Chan 2019): it is, along with the US and the European Union, one of the heaviest users of antidumping duties under the WTO (Rodrik 2017). Of note in the Nigerian arsenal is a ban on textile imports that lasted two decades until 1997 and was reinstated in 2002, that is, well after Nigeria's accession to the WTO in 1995. In 1989, close to 96 per cent of Nigerian tariff lines for textile and clothing were subjected to an import prohibition regime (Oyejide et al. 2013). When the ban was lifted in 2010, it was replaced with tariffs once again on textile imports.

Table 4: Comparative timeline of textile protection – India and Nigeria

	_			-			
Up to 50% tariffs on Japanese textiles	Import ban on textiles during World War II	Most te	ions also on	1992: Trade liberalisation reforms. Textile EPR fall below 100%			
INDIA							
1930s NIGERL	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s 1995 : WTO	2000s
Import quotas on Japanese textiles		High tariffs on textiles. Stricter import quotas on Japanese textiles.	1977: import ban on all textiles. 136% EPR on cotton prints prior to ban	Import ban, & licens- ing scheme for tex- tile or garment inputs	1997: textile import ban lifted	2002: Textile import ban rein- stated	

Source: Author's compilation EPR – effective protection rate

Year	India	Nigeria	Bangladesh	China	Pakistan	Thailand	USA
1995	49.4	38.7	34.2	30.1	9.2	51.3	10.6
2011	9.2	14.5	21.2	9.9	11.5	11.5	6.5

Table 5: Simple average tariff (effectively applied) on fabrics

Source: Oyejide et al.2013

Adapted from World Integrated Trade Solution Database.

Therefore, on paper, at least there were comparable protective environments to encourage local textile industries. Table 5 compares simple average tariff rates applied on fabrics in India, Nigeria and other major textile manufacturing countries in 1995 (earliest year available) and 2011. Dwelling on the figures for Nigeria, however, may be a somewhat futile exercise given that throughout Nigeria's restrictions on imports smuggling was a widespread phenomenon. The failure to protect domestic industry from stifling competition has more to do with Nigeria's political economy than its formal trade policy.

Smuggling is mentioned in the literature on the Indian textile industry. However, it appears to have been sufficiently limited (and often textiles were being smuggled *out* of India) that it is never mentioned as a constraint to the development of the industry (Sen 1975; Van Schendel 1993; Roy 1998). By contrast, in the literature on Nigeria, accounts of smuggling are frequent from the 1970s onwards. For example, lace fabrics made for the Nigerian market became very popular during the oil boom years (1970s) and in that decade Nigerian industries started producing lace locally. Yet, even after the 1977 textile import ban, Austrian lace manufacturers continued their thriving export trade to Nigeria, now transiting through Benin (Plankensteiner 2013). Newspaper articles during the 1980s often evoked the fight against smugglers of myriad goods, including textiles.

Despite on-paper draconian measures and occasional spectacular seizures, accounts suggest that large-scale smugglers often had powerful connections that shielded them from prosecution (Burgis 2016; Plankensteiner 2013). Reliable estimates of the extent of smuggling are difficult to come by: a 2010 World Bank report estimated that textiles worth USD 2.2 billion were smuggled into Nigeria from Benin annually and that textiles represented more than 50 per cent of all smuggled goods (Raballand and Mjekiqi 2010). In addition to smuggling, textile imports were coming in through official import waivers. These were intended to enable textile and garment manufacturers access to necessary inputs. However, the process of attributing these waivers was decried by industry analysts as inconsistent and non-transparent (Oyejide et al. 2013). ¹⁴

Exasperated industry players have characterised the tariffs and import bans as counterproductive, because they encouraged smuggling and provided rent-seeking opportunities to customs officials (Pessu and Agboma 2018; Oyejide et al. 2013). In the rent-seeking culture that has prevailed in Nigeria since the discovery of oil, import restrictions could not find the necessary rigour for effective application. Industrial textile manufacturing in Nigeria, which had a shorter existence than in India, therefore enjoyed only a brief period of ten to twenty years of actual protection to consolidate its strengths.

Chinese textile imports have particularly been decried for their deleterious effect on the Nigerian textile sector. The chronology of Nigerian textile industry performance, however, indicates a decline almost a decade prior to a significant spike in Chinese imports (see figures below). Peaks of output and employment in the textile sector were reached in 1982 and around 1985 respectively. The decline was slow at first and then accelerated from 1990 (Muhammad et al. 2017). Chinese textile exports to Nigeria, however, were extremely low in the 1990s and started to rise significantly only from the 2000s. ¹⁵ This suggests that other factors fragilised the Nigerian textile industry first, creating opportunities that were exploited by Chinese imports. Chronologically, we can argue that fundamental weaknesses of an undeveloped small-scale sector and weak endogenisation left the Nigerian textile sector extremely vulnerable to the multiple shocks (foreign exchange, falling consumer incomes, erratic electricity supply) of the 1980s. Once cheap textiles from China started arriving massively in the 2000s, an already difficult operating environment for textile industries was made even more difficult, and the closure of textile factories greatly accelerated.



Figure 1: Number of textile factories in Nigeria, 1956–2015

Source: Muhammad et al. 2017

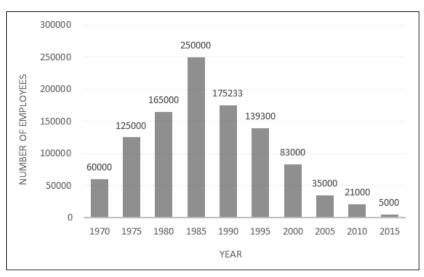


Figure 2: Employment in the Nigerian textile industry, 1970-2015.

Source: Muhammad et al 2017

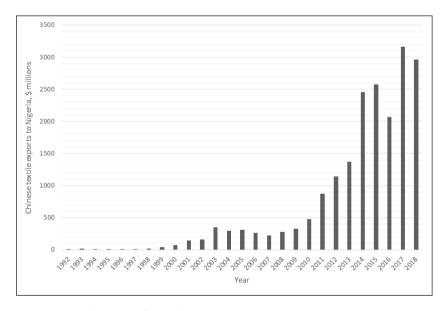


Figure 3: Textile exports from China to Nigeria, 1992–2018. Source: World Integrated Trade Solution Database (World Bank)

Conclusion

This article has examined three differences in the Indian and Nigerian textile manufacturing histories that highlight different facets of economic nationalism. Chang (2004) proposes the term 'selective industrial and trade policies' in lieu of ISI to highlight the idea embedded in such strategies that some economic activities are more socially desirable than others. Although post-independence Nigeria expressed economic nationalist aspirations, comparison with the Indian experience shows a lack of sufficiently selective policies to translate such aspirations into reality. The article has shown that India actively chose to bolster its craft textile sector to maximise employment through labour intensity; Nigeria did not. India actively chose to limit foreign participation in its textile sector in the first decades; Nigeria remained ambivalent and indigenisation policies were thwarted in practice. In trade protection, India and Nigeria visibly made similar choices, but corruption rendered Nigeria's trade protection nothing but a paper tiger. The three factors explored in this article have affected textile manufacturing in several West African countries with similar textile craft heritages and tastes for identity fabrics. What useful big lessons can we glean?

Firstly, a disconnect between craft and industrial textile production generated lost opportunities. In the context of demand for identity fabrics, textile production building on artisanal heritage should have taken much greater space in the local market. Had craft production developed and innovated alongside industrial production, craft productivity would have increased and demand would have been propelled both by falling prices and new fabrics invented in response to changing tastes. This lost opportunity takes on even greater significance when one considers that the global scene has shifted significantly since India successfully protected its markets, and it is more difficult to attain the same levels of protection through trade policy today (Rodrik 2017). Specific localised consumer tastes can offer a certain level of natural protection, as we saw in the survival of craft textiles in both India and Nigeria during colonisation.

Secondly, past poor choices regarding factor endowments and capital intensity handicapped industrial development in Nigeria and other African countries. In today's rapidly shifting world of manufacturing, in-depth analyses of ideal choices of capital or labour intensity for African industry are needed. Rodrik (2017) notes that manufacturing has become much more capital- and skill-intensive, substantially reducing the labour-absorbing potential for low-skilled workers. ¹⁶ Farsightedness and deliberation, more than ever, are essential when making choices of manufacturing models to ensure desirable socioeconomic outcomes.

Thirdly, the dichotomy between Nigeria's protective trade regime and the massive influx of smuggled textiles shows just how harmful endemic corruption can be to national industrialisation strategies. This dimension, the potential disablement of industrialisation efforts, should not be forgotten in strategies to fight corruption.

One issue not addressed in the article is that of electricity supply. The influence of poor electricity supply on the Nigerian manufacturing sector as a whole cannot be downplayed. Had the weaknesses in Nigeria's policy environment explored in this article been corrected, would the textile sector have had sufficient resilience to counter the challenge of expensive and erratic energy driving up production costs? That is a question for further debate.

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Notes

- 1. For weddings, often family and friends of the spouses tailor clothes in the same fabric. This ceremonial uniform is called *aso-ebi*.
- 2. Wax-print fabrics were brought to West Africa in the 19th century by Dutch traders who had failed to find a market for their industrial copies of Javanese batik in Indonesia (Grosfilley 2006; Sylvanus 2002). Guinea brocade was originally imported from Europe one account traces its arrival in Africa to a Malian trader who imported brocade from Germany, making adjustments to please the African market (De Bla 2014). The finishing, and particularly dyeing, of brocade is sometimes done on the African continent Mali, Senegal and northern Nigeria are particularly renowned for their brocade-dyeing crafts industry. Lace fabrics were originally imported from Europe during colonialism. Later, Austrian and Swiss lace started to be produced specifically for the Nigerian market, in particular during the oil boom when a huge taste for lace fabrics developed (Plankensteiner 2013; Olorunyomi 2011).
- 3. The research included a one-week field visit to Nigeria (19–26 January 2020), but not to India. Literature on the Indian textile experience is more readily available. Furthermore, as the underlying objective of the study is to offer lessons for Nigerian policy, it was more crucial to confirm preliminary conclusions from the literature through field observation and interviews in Nigeria.
- 4. See, for instance, Boulanger (2006) on the difficulty of defining economic nationalism, or Hall (2004), who argues for motivation rather than policy content as the defining feature of economic nationalism.

- 5. Austin's (2013) analysis of labour-intensive industrialisation in global history characterises West Africa, including precolonial and colonial Nigeria, as short of labour. Regions of what would become Nigeria were particularly hard hit by the slave trade; between 1676 and 1730, 42 % of slaves taken from Africa were shipped out of the Bight of Benin (Falola and Heaton 2008: 53). However, by independence, the Nigerian population had grown rapidly and it was, after Burundi, the most densely populated country in Africa (Kilby 1969).
- 6. Powerloom weaving is an intermediate technology that uses non-automatic looms driven by electric power. The powerloom sector grew to include a range from small home-based production units to factory-size units with hundreds of looms. The mill sector, by contrast, in the Indian definition, refers to large factories with integrated spinning, weaving and finishing units (Mazumdar 1991).
- 7. See, for instance, Mazumdar 1991.
- Interviews in January 2020 with industry players confirmed this. Textile
 engineering professor Olufemi Sunmonu mentioned doctoral research carried
 out on artisanal looms, but this research, as other research before, saw little
 uptake by manufacturers.
- 9. Comparative scholarship of textile manufacturing history between Nigeria and countries that emphasised large-scale industrial manufacturing, like China, could further elucidate on the trade-offs of focusing on large-scale versus small-scale manufacturing. It is interesting to note that (former) textile giants like Japan, South Korea and China have largely lost their unique vestimentary codes.
- 10. One critical difference is that some identity-fabrics in Nigeria were initially of foreign origin wax fabrics, Guinea brocade and lace. It could be that taste preferences for these identity-fabrics are actually skewed in favour of foreign-produced versions.
- 11. At independence in 1947, India already had a much larger industrial base than Nigeria would have in 1960; India was the first non-Western power to set up a modern textile industry, preceding Japan's by twenty years and China's by forty years (Maddison 1971).
- 12. It is not clear whether this skill acquisition was facilitated by educational efforts. Further comparative research on education and training for textile production would be of interest.
- 13. The plan stated, for instance, 'Experience has shown through history, that political independence without economic independence is but an empty shell The interests of foreign private investors in the Nigerian economy cannot be expected to coincide at all times and in every respect with national aspirations' (Schatz 1977: 22).
- 14. India's import licensing system was also notoriously complex. However, analyses of the constraints of the system rarely bring up the issue of smuggling or bribery. A 1992 analysis (Aksoy 1992) of India's complex trade regime has no mention of the terms 'smugg', 'rent-seeking', 'corruption' or 'bribery', for instance.

- 15. These are official figures, and do not (fully) account for smuggling. The graph displays export figures reported by China, which are significantly higher than corresponding figures for imports reported by Nigeria. 1992 is the first year available in the data set. However, other data sets indicate a low level of exports of all products from China to Nigeria prior to this year.
- 16. Rodrik (2017) also warns that technological advances, such as 3D printing and robotisation, may wipe out the comparative advantage of low-income countries in labour-intensive manufacturing.

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