

The French Minister Colbert and His Economic Policy and Reforms under the Reign of Louis XIV 1661-1683

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Abstract

This research aims to shed light with some brevity on the reign of Louis XIV (1661-1683) of France, a period that has brought famous reformers who helped and served Louis XIV and contributed in raising the state and managing its affairs in various fields with exceptional ability and intelligence. The hard work and intelligence of those famous reformers were reflected on the state systems. Louis XIV had given the mission of reform in France. Those reformers were headed by the French economic reformer, Colbert, who held the biggest burden of France's economic reforms. Therefore, the focus of the present paper will be on the most important reforms embodied in Colbert's reforms in that period and the extent of their influence on France.

Keywords: France, Louis XIV, absolute rule, French reformers.

Introduction

When talking about France, especially the period from the mid-seventeenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth century, it is necessary to talk about France under the reign of one of the leaders of absolute governance, Louis XIV, especially the first period of his reign. This period was marked by famous reformers who worked to elevate the state and strengthen the centralized governance. Colbert was the most notable of those economic reformers (1661-1683). He held most of the burden of France's economic reforms which included fiscal, tax, industrial, and agricultural reforms. Moreover, there was a focus on the reform of the navy and the various types of transportation as well as the attention to the issues of art, literature, and architecture. Finally, the role of Colbert and his influence in the French Laws and regulations will be pointed out.

The Life of Colbert: -

Jean-Baptiste Colbert, (Colbert), was born on 29 August 1619 in Reims, France, and belonged to a bourgeois family from the city of Reims. His father was a wool merchant. Colbert claimed that he had noble

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Scottish origin, however, he had no proof of that. During his early life, Colbert studied in a Christian school. Besides his studying in the Christian school, he worked in one of the exchangers in Paris. Later, he worked in the Chaplain, a notary office in Paris. When he was 20 years old, he joined the army as a clerk due the influence of one of his uncles who was married to the sister of the Minister of Defense, Michael Le Tellier. For a few years, Colbert worked as an inspector in the army besides other duties. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Defense, Le Tellier, transferred Colbert to a better job due to his exceptional abilities and hard work. The Minister chose him to be his special secretary in 1649 (1). Colbert's hard work drew the attention of his superiors to appoint him as the manager the farm of Cardinal Mazarin where he successfully managed the farm. Later, Cardinal Mazarin recommended him to King Louis XIV. After the death of Mazarin, Colbert became the first minister of Louis XIV in 1661 and presided over all ministries except the war. King Louis assigned him to reform the fiscal systems in the country and inspecting the buildings, the royal factories, trade, and art in 1664. In 1665, Colbert was assigned as a general inspector of the financial affairs. Colbert headed most of the ministries in France.

Colbert is considered a proponent of mercantilism doctrine in France which was named after him (Colbertism).

Based on the above brief introduction, it can be noticed that Colbert gained the King's attention sense nobody during Louis XIV's reign reached his position. Colbert remained in the service of the King till his death on 6 September 1683. Colbert was buried in the Chapel of Saint Eustache in Paris (2).

Reign of Louis XIV (The Absolute Monarchy): -

Louis XIV was in power from 1661-1715 (3). The first period of his reign was marked by securing France from invasion. Louis XIV was the first to make the monarchy a serious profession, having decided from the very beginning and after the death of Cardinal Mazarin in 1661 (4), to be the sole authority and to rule alone without anyone participating in the authority. He also decided to supervise the administration of the government in person. Over a span of fifty-four years, he ruled the country without the position of prime minister, confirming that he will be the prime minister himself (5). He considered himself a person with a divine function, entrusted by the Divine, which inspires his deeds. Therefore, even the small issues had to be approved by him. He considered monarchy as a profession of grace, nobility, and pleasure and no one deserved to share this position. He regarded himself as (the shade of God on Earth) (6). He expressed his policy profoundly when he proudly said his famous phrase "I am the state" as he addressed the staff of the Paris Parliament (Central Court of Paris) (7),

"You gentlemen thought that you are the state, but I am the state and the state is me" (8).

The monarchy of Louis XIV was a new matter for Europe. In fact, England hated the example of the tyrannical individual rule more than France did. Actually, the English Parliament, the English courts, and the constitutional documents that were promoting the people of England rights have all created a kind of custom and tradition that the Stewart family could not uproot (9) whereas France, all through its history, did not know anything like the great regime of Louis XIV as a king. As a matter of fact, Voltaire called that era the "Louis XIV era". In this era, the absolute monarchy in the eye of Louis XIV seemed to be the optimal way of rule since Louis XIV, during his early life, was influenced by the troubles of the Fronde (La Fronde), which had a profound effect on the views of the young king and his dislike of the entire parliamentary system (10). At the time, France also did not know list of rights, as the General Assembly faded and interrupted its meetings forty-seven years before Louis XIV came to rule France and that continued a century and a quarter after his coming until it was called to convene when France was at the gates of the revolution in 1789 (11).

The reign of Louis XIV was not characterized by a supernatural power in war and politics but he was an absolute king in every sense. He was keen to preserve the king's stature and to bring pomp and majesty to the throne. He was able to transform France and to make it a destination country in all matters (12). The French people were in dire need for comfort and rest as they suffered in the period leading up to the reign of Louis XIV from Internal problems and foreign wars brought by Richelieu (13). They had no choice but to obey the King (14). Louis XIV by no doubt was supported by a group of great men and administrators trained by Mazarin in the affairs of the state who showed great ability and intelligence which were reflected in the state systems (15). Some of the names that excelled were Hugues de Lionne in diplomacy and Fouquet in economic affairs, however, the King's trust in Fouquet was lacking due to his conduct, especially since Mazarin had previously warned him about Fouquet. Therefore, the King decided to get rid of him. Thus, the King appointed Colbert as his aide but soon he replaced Fouquet as the head of the country's finances and as the greatest and smartest economists of his era, where his fingerprints were left on the industry, commerce, and maritime organizations (16). Louis XIV achieved success at home and abroad not reached by Richelieu or Mazarin and was called "The Great King". France rose during the reign of Louis XIV a high degree in the realm of the European politics (17). King Louis XIV deserved to be called the Great King because of his great personality as a king. This was the reason behind the success and stability of the country which was clear

in all the economic reforms that he did besides his personal interest. In addition, the great men that he inherited from the era of Richelieu and Mazarin like Colbert helped in his reforms. Later on, we will shed some light on Colbert and his most important contributions in the reforms done in all fields.

Colbert's Economic Policy: -

The story of the economic status in France in the period that we are discussing is the story of Colbert, his economic policy, the study of his goals and means, the obstacles that he had encountered, and the failure that he faced. All of that will give us a full and an accurate image of that period more than any methodological presentation (18).

Colbert was one of the statesmen of the first years of the reign of Louis XIV, a character unmatched in rank and privilege, a personality that can be considered as one of the greatest financial mentalities in France. Colbert had been characterized to be accurate and hard-working and to have a great overall vigor and awareness of the details, which is an ability to overcome difficulties and accomplishing things that equal or surpass the ability of a group of ministers of ordinary abilities. In fact, he worked by himself for sixteen hours daily (19). In view of the high qualities of Colbert, Louis XIV entrusted him with the ministry of finance in 1661 (20), despite the fact that Louis XIV was not inclined to devote a certain person to the affairs of one ministry. As a matter of fact, the great deterioration of the French economy where a lot of money was spent in the period prior to the reign of Louis XIV during the battles fought by Richelieu in the twenties and thirties of the seventeenth century, and due to Mazarin's resistance to Fronde movement in the forties and fifties of the same century which led to debt accumulation on the French state reaching up to 11 million pounds. Moreover, the financial situation had worsened because the state's inability to meet its obligations which led to tax increases and the low value of the French currency when compared with the Spanish and Dutch currencies, and the French trade balance deficit (21). Although some of his ministers excelled in a particular sector, in which they had worked for some time and showed special competence, however, the internal reform that took place early in the reign of Louis XIV was mainly the work of the minister of finance and economy Colbert, who in this field carried out glorious works that made him among the great reformers in the history of France (22). Colbert transformed the French economy from an agricultural feudal economy to a capitalist economy by encouraging industry and trade (23). As a result of the great deterioration of the economy and the increase in money spending, Colbert used to rebuild the French economy, the same dictatorial tactics similar to those used by Richelieu in the restructuring of the French state. He began to examine the methods of the tax collectors and who provided the army with clothing, food

and weapons, and provided loans to the citizens or the state treasury, some of whom were very wealthy. For this purpose and at the request of Colbert, the King formed in September 1665 "A judicial council" comprising of councilors and parliamentarians, to investigate financial irregularities, abuses, and embezzlement committed since 1635. All Treasury staff, income earners and tax collectors were asked to provide records showing the legality of their gains and as a result of these investigations some of the rich were sent to prison and sentenced to hard labor. Others were sentenced to death. These acts were described as "Colbert's terrorism" (24). Thus, this man was able to double the income of the royal treasury within ten years, not by doubling taxation, which is the easiest way to increase government income, but by adopting a plan that Colbert had drawn to himself, which included the following (25):

- 1- Collect state funds by means of efficient and honest members and removing the incompetent ones, which resulted in the acquisition of large part of funds as a result of the interruption of thefts by staff members who had collected them.
- 2- These funds were disbursed wisely and based on economic grounds.
- 3- The tax burden had been distributed on all classes, especially those able to bear it.
- 4- Encourage the production in some branches of industry and the types of industries that the country needs which led to self-sufficiency.

Indeed, the last point represents the most important element of Colbert's economic policy, which is based on the fact that there is no political independence for a state without its economic independence, which is the economic policy that some have called the Colbert policy, named after Colbert. This policy is based on the premise that the state in peacetime, and especially in the case of war, the nation needs to produce, both from its own territory and from its colonies, enough to exist. Second, to promote prosperity in the country by selling surplus production to foreign countries, taking into account that the quantity of imports is lower than exports. In this case, the difference will enter the state coffers as a gold currency and thus the reserves of precious metals increases and that is a sign of economic power in the eyes of the traders (26). That is what Colbert was convinced of when he said that "that the richness of the state is measured by its currency, and to enrich the Kingdom we must buy less from foreigners and sell them a lot". In order for Colbert to achieve his economic policy, his hand of reform reached many facets, including financial, industrial and law, as well as to the navy, trade and colonies. (27).

No one was aware before Colbert of the value of the navy, trade and colonies, and the importance of sound financial management and

improved transport. No one before him had realized that the power of the state was measured by industry, trade, agriculture and the efforts of its people. At that time France was underdeveloped in the fields of trade and industry due to poor transport and internal customs barriers and different laws. Furthermore, the middle class was reluctant to undertake business ventures, especially overseas. They were used to buying government jobs. Moreover, there were numerous taxes which had also contributed to underdevelopment (28). Colbert has assumed almost all the burdens of the state except issues related to matters of war and internal affairs. Colbert paid particular attention the construction of roads, digging of canals and the construction of ports (29). Some see Colbert as is the only person who reached the true greatness after Mazarin in the service of Louis XIV.

Fiscal and Tax Reforms: -

As soon as Louis XIV assigned the task to Colbert, who was trained by Mazarin, to take over the ministry of finance in 1661, the restoration of the financial situation to its previous good state and ridding the country of the state of confusion and economic chaos that the country had been suffering from for half a century, was his first priority. His motto was that "The power of France depends on its wealth, and its wealth depends on work, . The power of a nation does not rest on glamorous appearance, but it does rest on sound industry, trade, agriculture and services performed by the strata of the society (30). He also set a motto for himself to develop the wealth of France, making it the richest nation, by blocking money from leaving the country. On the contrary, he planned to attract foreign investments, in order to increase the resources that can be used in the public policies of the State. He considered this process as a financial war, which could promote France among other states (31).

Using his previous experience, Colbert directed his attention to financial reform, since he inherited an empty treasury from Mazarin and Fouquet. Therefore, he put in place for the country's finances a firm reform plan that would lead to an increase in the national wealth by regulating taxes and developing resources through which he was able to restore the financial situation in the country to its former position (32). He managed to secure a balanced budget by doing rigorous accounting and reducing burdens. He was angered by the confusion and ambiguity introduced by Fouquet and his predecessors on the management of the public treasury. Hence, he decided as an accountant to put simple and easy data on the revenues and expenditures, through which the king could from time to time know the exact situation of his treasury. For this purpose, starting in 1667, he regularly kept (a large register) of imports and a journal of expenditures which the king is kept informed of each month. With regard to the budget, he prepared the (Forecast statement) in October

and the interim budget for the following year and recorded (investigation data) in the month of February, and the final accounts for the previous year (33).

In order to reduce the financial burdens, Colbert took several bold and effective measures, as he reduced or even cancelled the state loans concluded, especially during the Richelieu and Mazarin era. The interest payments of those loans each year absorbed more than one third of the imports. Based on his knowledge of the flaws of the tax system, he found that his country had an unjust system of taxation, where the country does not benefit from it as much as the employees who collected taxes. He discovered that direct taxes were transferred into the hands of a large number of employees, most of whom embezzled much of that money. In regard to indirect taxes that were collected by civil parties, he found that those civil parties benefited from it with an additional profit, so the state actually received less money than the taxpayers paid. To handle it all, Colbert put in place a tax system through which he could tighten the noose on the persons embezzling money. In the end, Colbert managed to control the government's resources from tax collection, and the state's finances increased by millions of pounds. Even though Colbert had reduced the taxes imposed on farmers by half, in order to improve their conditions, but replaced it by imposing a tax on luxury items (34). This led to an increase in imports due to what is collected from the taxes because the taxes were heavy and inadequate together, and poorly distributed and collected. Therefore, he carried out several procedures that led to substantial increase in the proceeds of indirect taxation due to the strict control of those involved in tax collection. All those known for dishonesty in tax collection were expelled from the service. Moreover, indirect charges were imposed on goods so that the tax burden is distributed to all classes and not only the common class. The direct taxes on the land were lessened in order to relieve the financial burden on peasants (35). The same was the case with the resources of the Royal property. In return, some taxes increased such as the free clergy donations and some provinces and the in-kind taille which was less than the personal taille. He also abolished a number of jobs that were not needed by the state (36). Furthermore, Colbert restored Richelieu's system of region governance (37) and he reduced the personal property tax or the personal taille, the most hated tax to the people, with the burden resting on the middle class and below. However, the peasants did not benefit much from that, as the treasury replaced the drop resulting from the taille tax reduction by imposing other taxes on consumer goods where the burden was shared by all societal strata. Through those measures that bear the character of tyranny, which were not at all popular with the people, these systematic efforts have yielded their fruits, since 1661-1667, the state's resources have increased dramatically and since 1662 revenues

have exceeded expenditures. This situation continued until 1672. Colbert was able to double the king's income in 10 years, benefiting from the twelve years of peace, despite the fact that the war on the transfer of the right of inheritance, carried out by Louis XIV after the death of Philip IV of Spain, demanding the low countries in the name of his wife Maria Teresa, the daughter of Philip IV was quick and inexpensive (38).

Colbert's reforms in the financial field did not succeed as desired, as the previous mistakes were deeply rooted in the social system, and the worst failure of Colbert was to retention of the old tax system. Despite Colbert's reforms, the nobility's privilege remained in tax exemption and the system of obligation remained, which was monopolized by the tax collectors (39). Besides, the wars prevailing in the European continent necessitated the imposition of heavy taxes. Just a little before the Wars of Louis XIV (1667) that direct and indirect taxes were imposed (40).

Colbert's Reforms in Industry: -

Colbert made a great effort to expand the scope of the French industry. He was credited with making France a major industrial country. Therefore, the French industry made a remarkable progress in the second half of the seventeenth century, thanks to Colbert's administration. It was noted that the state intervened in the industry was to manage and protect it, which was necessary because the French bourgeoisie did not invest its money in this kind of business (41). It was clear that Colbert sought to expand the field of industry not only to make France self-sufficient as much as possible but also to make it able to export abroad in order to obtain gold and silver from this export. That required money and productive power. To achieve that, Colbert created a number of "royal industries" such as the glass industry. In 1665, he started the Royal Glass Industry to replace the glass imported from Venice, which was banned in 1672. In addition to that, he established factories for textiles, silk, and carpets in Paris (42). He also created new industries such as wood and steel (43). For that purpose, Colbert and at exorbitant prices summoned a number of skilled foreign workers and manufacturers from all over Europe; from Holland, England, and Italy, to teach French workers the secrets of the industries that were famous in their countries. The king provided them with generosity the capital necessary for the construction of factories and the purchase of raw materials, as well as rewards for outstanding workers (44). Moreover, the king granted handicraftsmen financial assistance to help them double their production. This was reflected in the significant and remarkable improvement in French products, both in terms of quantity and quality. Small workshops and factories became larger and took the form of large factories in every sense of the word. That led to a clear recovery in commercial affairs (45).

Colbert's goal was to liberate France from depending on foreign manufactures as a first step (46) and to reach a situation whereby foreign countries depend on France to import French products. In order to do that, he set many regulations and instructions, which were estimated at more than 150 decrees, for the manufacturers and forced them to sign their names for what they produced, which had developed into what is known as the trademark (47). He made every effort in his power to increase and expand the scope and diversity of the French industry, from fabrics to mining and iron industries. In addition to that, he did not overlook the increasing needs of the Army and the Navy, which had contributed to increasing the production of their individual uniforms and the production of their needs of ships and weapons of all kinds (48). Colbert imported all the equipment and what was needed for each industry from abroad, as he was bringing skilled workers, as mentioned above, from areas of a particular famous industry. He attracted skilled workers of fancy textiles from the Netherlands, miners and coppersmiths from Sweden, and brought from Italy the art of crepe industry, and from Venice glass and mirror craftsmen (49). The King's interest in the construction of royal palaces and providing them with all decorations as seen in the "Palace of Versailles". At the "Château de Marly", it was seen as an encouraging factor in providing many opportunities for some French industries such as "The Gobelin, mirrors, and fine exquisite textiles". Moreover, different fields of interest had opened multiple opportunities for a large number of painters, actors, photographers, and thousands of professionals involved in the manufacturing of furniture, silver tools and other industries associated with the decoration of palaces. Some of the industries exported abroad were also famous, such as watches, delicate textiles, and exquisite art pieces, thus adding to their traditional exports of wine and coarse textiles new assets of exports creating abundant profit (50).

The industrial production attracted the attention of Colbert, who worked to develop, organize and protect it. The production was developed through the pursuit of the unemployed, the abolition of the seventeen holidays among the old holidays like many church holidays and others that hindered production. He also issued laws that prevented French workers from leaving the country with the aim of securing cheap manpower. Besides, he encouraged monopolies, especially overseas. Furthermore, he established model industries, and promoted them. Then he worked on imitating foreign products and succeeded in establishing excellent factories that operate mainly for export. Some of those factories belonged to the state and some of them belonged to individuals, but given privileges such as exemption from taxation, insurance of financial assistance in exchange for clear undertakings in production (51).

As for the organization in the work of the Board of Commerce, which was re-organized in 1665 and established in 1666, general regulations for factories and special patents on various industries, citing the technical details in the industry and severely punishes manufacturing defects. In order to implement those orders, Colbert encouraged the spread of various industries that were later named the “varieties”. Subsequently, the free industries were pursued under the patent of 1673. The factory inspectors, whose job was created in 1669, were given extensive powers to supervise and control (52).

To secure and protect the French factories, new customs tariff was issued in 1664. This hit the foreign products upon entering France. In 1667, these efforts ended in the prohibition of all English and Dutch products from entering France. All this resulted in a significant improvement in the French industrial production both in terms of quantity and quality which had led to a clear recovery in business affairs (53).

Colbert's measures to protect the national industry from foreign competition: -

Colbert directed his attention to the development of the country's products and industries and worked to protect them from foreign competition, by strengthening the French industry with a strong barrier of high custom duties imposed on imported goods (54). That led to a fierce customs war with the Netherlands which was the prominent Competitor of the French economy at the time (55). The customs war between the Netherlands and France ended in the armed confrontation in 1672 that lasted for a long time and a bad impact on Colbert's economic and financial policy (56). From the other measures that Colbert worked on in order to protect and promote the export of French products by exempting them from taxes. He also set up effective conditions that make French industries of fine quality so that the foreigners are tempted to buy them and to give the opportunity for the famous fine products of France to flood the world markets such as silk products, glass, silk and furniture (57). Consequently, Colbert succeeded in the field of industry, especially with regard to increasing and diversifying production as well as his success in increasing the state's income, making it the most powerful country in Europe. He achieved this goal through the measures he took to increase national wealth. On the other hand, the Colbert ways did hurt the interest of the consumer to the benefit of the producer, not to mention the producers relying on the state more than on his expertise (58).

Colbert and his commercial and colonial expansionist aspirations: -

The trade sector in France had Colbert's attention, as one of his goals was to work on expanding the trade abroad so that it would go hand

in hand with the domestic industrial renaissance. That is why he was seeking to find markets outside the country for French goods and French agencies to export them. It was necessary to open markets outside Europe, as France was in constant wars with most of the neighboring European countries. Therefore, it was difficult to export French goods to the European countries, in addition to the customs duties which were imposed mutually between France and other countries (59).

Colbert has looked with envy to the wealth of neighboring countries, especially the Netherlands. The Netherlands acquired that wealth through its trading companies such as the East India Company. That made Colbert think of forming a great maritime empire and global trade by French companies, believing that colonies had great commercial benefits which could be a popular market for the French products (60). Therefore, Colbert showed a special interest in colonialism overseas, which came in line with his vast colonial dreams (61) and based on the principle that trade is a "money war". He also believed that the country's wealth can only be achieved by exporting a lot and importing a little. Indeed, in Colbert's era, export operations were the door to wealth for France (62). In addition to that, the French realised that the power of France not only lies in the weakness and splitting of its neighbors but also lies in its resources, its wealth, its people, its army, and its fleet.

Accordingly, Colbert carried out the major projects represented in the construction of the Orltan Canal, and a canal linking the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, namely the Two-Seas Canal or the South Canal. The South Canal was between Toulouse and Sète, which was built because of the strong insistence of the engineer Riquet between 1666-16680, and was successfully completed before his death. Thanks to this canal and to the aid that Colbert had granted to ships' owners that he was able to build commercial ships, which were the reason for his success in overseas trade (63). Therefore, Colbert encouraged foreign trade and worked on the establishment of maritime trade companies similar to the Dutch companies. He founded the French East India Company with a monopoly on French trade in 1664. He also established similar companies to trade with the West Indies to exploit the Sugar islands as well as other companies in America, Africa, the east of the Mediterranean and northern Europe and Spain (64). Colbert also encouraged the expansion in Canada, where he was able to reach the Gulf of Mexico through the Mississippi. He then declared the possession of the Mississippi Basin, in the heart of North America, in the name of the King of France, Louis XIV, which he called Louisiana. He then encouraged the French to settle in that region (65). Moreover, he established important trading centers in India, Madagascar and

Senegal, and thus France occupied its place in this field competing with other countries such as the Netherlands.

The protection of the emerging French maritime trade and the new French colonies and the routes of communication had become a necessary matter associated with the creation of a strong French navy, which was under the responsibility of Colbert and his son Seignelay. Hence, Colbert worked on the establishment of an important commercial fleet and another military one in 1661 of twenty ships and 60 naval warfare officers, which increased to 140 ships in 1688, with 230 of those men (66). Then he established a system for compulsory military service in the navy for all sailors and fishermen, and judges had been ordered to provide as many criminals as possible so as to work on warships as rowers. He also established a fund for the wounded on board those ships. Simultaneously, he established a number of harbors in Toulon, Rochford, Le Havre, and Calais-Brest (67), thereby becoming a major colonial power that grew and prospered under his firm administration (68).

In view of the importance of the link between the navy and the growth of colonies, Colbert made the French colonies affiliated with the Ministry of War (69). Thus, the commercial marine administration and the navy were united under one authority, which facilitated their engagement in war when France was forced to confront the English and Dutch Navy together between 1692-1704 (70).

France, with the efforts of Colbert, became the third country in the Atlantic Ocean and the first country in the Mediterranean, which made the French fleet outperform its competitors in the sea. With this fleet, France forced the fleets of other countries to start saluting their ships, otherwise would be attacked. Therefore, Colbert told Louis XIV that France wanted other countries to bow to France in respect at sea as at the king's court (71). Hence, it can be noticed that France has become a great colonial country. The king encouraged that very much and he, along with the princes and nobles, contributed to the capital of the emerging commercial companies (72). On the other hand, the middle class and the French public refrained from sharing their minister's enthusiasm and refused to participate in those projects. They refused to risk their money in adventures overseas, where success seemed doubtful. That was the reason for the failure of Colbert's project, forcing him to withdraw the monopoly privilege from the French East-India Company. In fact, he left the trade with the East Indies open to all merchants, provided that the company's ships and trading stations were used (73). Although he failed to accomplish his dream of establishing a great empire and global trade, however, it can be said that Colbert provided the colonial movement with a strong incentive. As a matter of fact, France is largely indebted to his determination and volition for what colonies France had. At the beginning of the

eighteenth century, France had colonies in North America, the farms on the islands of Western India and in Madagascar, and the trading stations in India. That constituted a great legacy for France, which was not appreciated. Actually, France did not defend those gains as should be. If the French had continued with Colbert's spirit to establish arsenals in France, it would have been possible that the French flag still flies today on the castle of Quebec and on some parts of India (74).

As far as domestic trade is concerned, there were difficulties facing it, especially since the remnants of the feudal system still existed, represented in the form of taxes. However, in 1664, Colbert worked on encouraging domestic trade by facilitating the transportation of goods between different parts of the country through the new routes of internal transport as well as building of strategic roads in the northern and southern parts of the country. In addition to that, Colbert dug canals and built ports (75). He also tried to liberate the national trade from the internal excises that were imposed on the goods transported from one region to another, which caused the delay in the internal trade (76). However, the results in this field were weak and did not live up to the level hoped for by Colbert (77).

Colbert's reforms in the field of agriculture and livestock: -

The agricultural problems received little of Colbert's attention. Agriculture was the least touched by the reforms of Colbert, as the farming methods remained very undeveloped. As a result, the country failed to support the food needs of its population, more than 20 million people. To address this problem, in 1662, the king imported wheat and sold it to the poor at a cheap price or even as a grant. Besides, he exempted them from three million francs of taxes due on them. He also put in place some legislations that took into account the conditions of the rural people and eased some of the country's tragedies. Those legislations stated that it was prohibited to seize the animals of the farmers, their carts, or their tools in fulfilment of a debt, even if it was a debt for the king. He also established farms and stables that take care of horses of the farmer for free, and hunters were prevented from entering the fields with sown seeds. Moreover, and tax exemptions were provided to those who rehabilitated and cultivated abandoned lands. However, those facilities would not have penetrated to the heart of the problem, which was the imbalance between human fertility and soil fertility as well as the lack of mechanical inventions. In fact, it was a real problem for the European peasants as a whole. Perhaps the French peasants were not in much hardship as their counterparts in England and Germany. Colbert had sacrificed agriculture for the benefit of industry. Therefore, in order to feed the growing city dwellers and the King's armies, he banned price hikes of grains so as to be in line with other services (78). However, Colbert hoped that the cities would be provided with bread and raw

materials at a cheap price. That was what happened between 1663-1674, when the terrible food crisis of 1661-1663 occurred, due to low prices and unfavorable weather conditions (79). Nevertheless, agriculture had found the interest and encouragement of Colbert with the start-up of the industry and the growing demand for it by importing rams from England and Spain with the aim of improving the domestic stock. He encouraged the breeding of all kinds of livestock as well as breeding horses. The state encouraged industrial crops such as the planting of flax, hemp, and mulberry trees needed for the silk worm to produce "Silk" (80). The king also provided the farmers with seeds and cattle and exempted them from taxes in the years of drought. In return, he demanded them to provide wheat and wine for the army. The reforms of Colbert continued and were carried out by peasants' associations or wealthy bourgeoisie. Some masters started new investments. They revived and planned the land and they supplied the farmers with rhinoceros. They also combined the investments to double the production and took over some communal lands by choice. The government cancelled or kept their ownership, according to its tendency to protect the small farmers and to increase production (81).

Colbert's reforms in the field of art and literature: -

Colbert was initially a man of money and economy, but his achievements in other fields were not less than his financial and economic projects (82). Therefore, his financial and economic concerns did not prevent him from giving attention to the issues of art, literature and architecture. Hence, he founded academies to promote science, arts, and music such as the Academy of Sciences and the "Institut Français", as it is called at the present time. He also ordered to upgrade the Academy of France founded by Richelieu, built the Great Astronomical Observatory in Paris, and strengthened the administrative system the established by Richelieu (83). Colbert's strict hand extended to include those arts as well. Moreover, Colbert worked on the concentration of the art activity under one department, which was entrusted to one of the artists, Charles Le Brun (who was the manager of the Gobelins Factory). In that factory, the artistic activity varied from painting to carving and weaving...etc. (84). Charles Le Brun headed an army of artists of painters, sculptors, actors, and weavers. The credit goes to the joint efforts of that army that those masterpieces of art came to the world. Those masterpieces were known as the Louis XIV style. In addition to that, Colbert paid special attention to the Royal Academy of painting and carving, over which he practiced absolute authority and granted members monopolistic grants. As a result, the profession of art became restricted to them. He also controlled the aspects of mental activity as he created new academies like the Academy of Dancing in 1661 and the petite

Academy of Painting in 1663. In 1665, he established the magazine of scientists to publish the new industrial knowledge. Then, in 1666, he founded the Academy of Sciences to encourage scientific research. In 1669, he founded the Music Academy. To encourage French and foreign artists, he established the Academy of Photography and architecture in 1671 (85). Drama and plays reached new heights, and their members enjoyed monopolistic grants (86). Based on that, it can be noticed that Colbert had given art and literature all care and attention, as this interest went in parallel with his economic and financial interest.

Colbert's reforms in the field of legislation and law: -

The process of regulating French laws was another manifestation of Colbert's interest, as the king had written in his diaries that the disturbance prevails everywhere. This statement is not without exaggeration in relation to the internal situation in 1661. The first thing that the king did, with the help of Colbert, was to consolidate order by legislative reforms. The King and Colbert regretted the diversity of legal applications in force (the Roman rights in the South and the various customs in the north). Therefore, Colbert tried to set up a legislative unit in the country and managed to enact six great laws, known as the "Laws of Louis" (87). Those laws were a set of well-prepared legislations dealt with civil and criminal procedures, maritime trade, and the colonial Negroes, defined as (the Black people Law), which was part of the Civil Code of 1667. Those laws consisted of Water and Forest Act 1669, the Criminal Code 1670, the Commercial Code 1673, the Maritime Code 1681, and the Colonial Code or Black Law 1685. Both of them, in their respective fields, attempted to establish the principles of a systematic, single form of law. In fact, the gap will often be wide between these texts and their applications and the contradictions of justice, as it remained clear particularly due to many numerous courts, the slow procedures and high costs of lawsuits, and the awful criminal principles (88). As for the colonies and their organization, Colbert's dreams were wide in this field, where he worked to push the colonial movement forward. France, in this field, owes much to Colbert's activity. That is why he worked to set French laws on colonies organization. However, those laws were not able to develop those colonies for those laws ignored the element of freedom (89). In addition to that, those laws kept torture as a punishment, and prohibiting certain groups, especially Jews and Protestants, from entering the colonies. Therefore, those laws were viewed as inhuman. Despite that, the legislations of that era had its importance, not only as the first important step towards the legislative unity of France that was later achieved under Napoleon's rule, but also because it set the main lines by which the procedures in the courts are still at work today. (90).

Colbert did not succeed in bringing all the French laws into one constitution, but the French society, until the revolution, remained subject to a complex collection of local customs accumulated over time. However, Colbert was able to give France the idea of collecting legislations, as he left behind some important scattered parts that can be composed when the time is right (91). As a matter of fact, it can be noticed that Colbert's goal of this great legal activity was to organize and unify the French law, which would make Louis XIV similar to Justinian I, the Byzantine emperor 482-565, who was famous for his attempts to unify the Roman law in one law (92).

Conclusion

Through the review of Colbert's economic policy and reforms, it can be noticed that the importance of those reforms and their impact on France in the second half of the seventeenth century were represented in:

1. The Reform of many economic aspects, such as "finance, industry, trade, agriculture and transportation", besides the promotion of arts and law, which have had a significant impact on the stability of France and its enjoyment of peace at home and abroad
2. The impact of these reforms on strengthening the central Government in France making it enjoy power, strength, greatness and pomp, a new thing that Europe had never known before
3. The significant impact on strengthening the French economic policy and placing it at the forefront of the competing countries in the field of economy and at the forefront of the industrial and commercial countries. In addition to that, making France at the forefront in the establishment of large overseas companies and their maritime presence in the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea, thanks to the strong naval fleet which was created by Colbert in France.
4. Colbert's interest in pushing forward the colonization movement, especially the overseas expansion movement in the East Indies, the monopoly of the East trade, the West Indies and in Canada and the Mississippi Basin in the heart of North America and the possession of this basin in the name of the King of France, which he named as Louisiana.
5. The tremendous efforts made by Colbert to reform the economic conditions in France, especially the finances of the country, and the transformation of the French economy from an agricultural feudal economy to a capitalist economy and the encouragement of manufacturing and trade. However, the great amounts of money that Colbert brought to the King's treasury, were not enough to cover the

costs of the wars of Louis XIV and his expansionist dreams, as well as the regal appearance and pomp of the royal court.

6. The life of this man, Colbert, was a great example of dedication to his work. since Charlemagne days, France has not known a single clever man like him. He helped to make a great nation of in so many aspects, where his reforms formed the economic mold of modern France. In fact, Napoleon did nothing more than to continue Colbert's efforts, whether in governance or Law. Moreover, France has never known wealth and prosperity as it did during the ten years of Colbert.

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- 4- Mazarin of Italian origin born in Pescina of the Sicilian family ,and was educated by the Jesuits in Rome until the age of 17, continued his education until he obtained a doctorate in law in 1622,and joined the Army in the Infantry Corps, earned the confidence of Pope Urban VIII (Urban VIII) appointed by the envoy of the French court between 1634-1636 then and with the encouragement of Richelieu joined the service of the King of France Louis XIII, and in 1663 became a French citizen, and he was admired by Richelieu, who was entrusted him with some delicate tasks in which Mazarin showed his competence, and then Richelieu introduced him to the king Who was happy with him , then Richelieu insisted on his promotion to the rank of Cardinal. This was done in the presence of the King of France in December 1641, after the death of Richelieu, he became the Prime Minister of France, and Louis XIII, died in 1642, Louis XIV was a five-year-old boy and Mazarin was the

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