An Economic Analysis of British Imperialism Success in India

Thesis: An analysis of Indian economy under imperialism reveals that British authority was unsuccessful at establishing India as a conducive, progressive, and sustainable source of profit.

I. Introduction: summary of British colonialism history in India

A. Main goal of colonialism was profit. When measured against this standard, Britain was ultimately unsuccessful at fully utilizing India as a colony the way they intended.

II. Lack of Economic Growth/Development

1. Economy generally remained stagnant during British rule in (Tomlinson)
2. British exploitation of resources without consideration for the needs of the Indian people
3. Impact of Britain’s position as India’s major trading partner
4. Change in India’s pattern of trade (Dutt)
5. Impact of environmental factors
6. Indian population was originally manageable, due to famines and epidemics keeping the growth rate low (Wakimura). Britain dependent on these factors for a manageable Indian population.
7. Disappearance of these crises led to population growth rate increase. This also led to decrease in land availability (Wakimura)

III. Absence of innovation and limited industrialization

1. Industrial revolution solely due to British import and control
2. Led to Indian dependency on Britain for industry
3. Producers kept wages low. Short term benefits (drain of wealth), but lack of long term technological advancement (Dutt)
4. British goods granted exceptions to tariffs and duties in Indian goods
5. Indian textiles prized and valued by the world. Once British gains control, they cut out the competition.
6. “These features, by worsening the competitive position of Indian handicrafts even slightly, could have led to the cumulative process of uneven development and structural change” (Dutt)

IV. Unsustainability

1. Expenses to industrialize were costly in terms of resources, time, and political budgeting.
2. System too complicated and expensive to meet the functional needs of the railways and its users (Christiansen)
3. Employment of sepoys costly.
4. “In the formation of our Indian army, our mistake has consisted of attempting to bring up the Sepoy up to the level of the British soldier by giving him the same discipline, the same clothing, the same arms, and a large portion of European officers, and it has been equally as great a mistake to suppose that a Sepoy army, organized as ours is, and carried to the extent we have done, is an economical force as compared to an European one” (Craufurd)
5. Considered necessary for control and peace, but was still eventually ineffective at maintaining both.

V. Conclusion

1. India lacked the attributes of a healthy economy, which caused difficulty and loss for Britain as its authority.
2. Short term goals led to ignorance of long term effects
3. British colonialism successful at leaving lasting influence on Indian culture and infrastructure, but was ultimately detrimental for the economy

Bibliography

Christensen, R.O. 1981."The State and Indian Railway Performance, 1870–1920: Part I, Financial Efficiency and Standards of Service." Journal of Transport History 2, no. 2: 1–15.

Craufurd, J. "India, as Connected with a Native Army." Royal United Services Institution. Journal 2, no. 6 (1858): 177-90. doi:10.1080/03071845809415905.

Dutt, Amitava Krishna. 1992. "The origins of uneven development: The Indian subcontinent." American Economic Review 82, no. 2: 146. Business Source Elite, EBSCOhost.

Iyer, Samantha. 2013. "Colonial Population and the Idea of Development." Comparative Studies In Society & History 55, no. 1: 65-91. America: History and Life with Full Text, EBSCOhost.

MacAlpin, Michelle Burge. 1979. "Dearth, Famine, and Risk: The Changing Impact of Crop Failures in Western India, 1870-1920." Journal Of Economic History 39, no. 1: 143. Business Source Elite, EBSCOhost.

Robb, Peter. 1981. "British Rule and Indian "Improvement." Economic History Review 34, no. 4: 507-523. Business Source Premier, EBSCOhost.

Tomlinson, B.R. 1996. *The Economy of Modern India, 1860–1970*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Wakimura, Kohei. 2012. “The Indian Economy and Disasters during the Late Nineteenth Century: Problems of Interpretation of Colonial Economy.” The BRICs as Regional Economic Powers in the Global Economy: 79-90. http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/rp/publications/no10/10-06\_Wakimura.pdf.

Woodman, Harold D. 1977. "Imperialism and Economic Development: England, the United States, and India in the Nineteenth Century.” Research In Economic History 2, 141-172. America: History and Life with Full Text, EBSCOhost (accessed April 27, 2016).