

In the British Empire's heyday before the WWI, its openly vicious armadas had already conquered over 25% of the world's land surface and extended its colonies and monopolized trade routes to every corner of the world (The Week, n.d.). This essay aims to refute the widely held belief that colonialism benefits the British, neither the macro-level society nor its people. Through the analysis of military expenditures, lost opportunities, and comparisons with other non-colonial countries, this essay argues that the British would have been much richer without colonialism.

MILITARY EXPENSES CALCULATED

Even though the prospect of a relatively inexpensive supply chain and a global commerce system in favor of the kingdom is alluring, the cost of maintaining a global empire is also tremendous. The cost covers official salary, the upkeep of a sufficient police force to maintain the fragile order, and the fund for building and maintaining infrastructures. Of the myriad expenses, The military spending to protect the worldwide empire against insurrections and other snooping nations undoubtedly accounts for a large portion.

Military expenses are especially high during wartime. For example, during the Seven Years' War against France in order to wrest control over North America, the country's national debt soared to approximately 133 million Euro, about twice the post-war value (Lumen Learning, n.d.). In fact, numerous regional conflicts that the nation was embroiled could be directly or indirectly traced back to British colonialism, including American Revolution, The Wars for Empire, and the Falkland War. The American Revolution is a typical example of avoidable and costly wars triggered by colonialism. The war's financial consequences are disastrous for England. During the War, UK's national debt's interest ballooned to over 10 million pounds. In addition, the global trade network was severely damaged, resulting in the plummet of domestic economical vitality that pushed the country into a recession (The Week, n.d.).

However, despite the high military cost during wars, UK's military budget is still astronomically high during peaceful periods to maintain the overwhelming force necessary for the expansion and the national security for a global empire sprawling over continents with scattered islands. The British armada's astounding tonnage and number of warships allowed for a glimpse of the high level of devotion. In 1880, ships of the royal navy had already surpassed the tonnage of 650,000, more than twice of the French navy and three times of the Russian Empire's navy (Kennedy, 1987). Up until 1913, when the empire reached its peak, UK maintained and even widened this smashing gap, quadrupling warship tonnage to over 2.7 million tons (Kennedy, 1987). In fact, before WWI, British military expenditures were over 15% of the country's GDP (Ellison, 2014), while the US, already another economic pole at the time, only "niggardly" offered approximately 7% for national defense ("Federal Yield Curve," n.d.). If colonialism hadn't taken place, the kingdom's military spending could have been drastically cut, and the money saved could have been invested in new industries, used to reduce various taxes or devoted to the development of critical technologies, all

of which could have significantly increased the wealth of the British.

THE ECHO OF COLONIALISM

Now, let's move to the panoramic view of colonialism's long-term impact on British. UK is one of the last countries to withdraw from colonialism. As the result, whereas the legacies of colonialism mindset had long ceased acting actively in politics of other established global empires like Portugal, the Netherlands, and France, the outgrowth of colonialism is still grasping a considerable portion of British politics.

One of the most influential and detrimental of these legacies is the unquenchable pursuit to have "sovereignty" tightly controlled by the government. This mindset originated during the lengthy expansion directed by colonialism. The United Kingdom had seized numerous vital trade routes, utilized vast manpower and resources, and imposed absolute authority upon its great territories during the process. Alongside these conquests, a policy of 'splendid isolation' arose. A stance that saw Britain as apart and above, a superior entity whose destiny was to rule rather than be ruled. It is a sentiment that has left a lasting impression on British political ideology and has fed into the modern reticence towards international cooperation. After the kingdom's global status and influence in every aspect shrank, the UK is desperate to regress back to the imperial past which it gradually strayed from (Rodriguez, 1987). However, this blind sense of superiority, a hangover from the days of 'splendid isolation', doesn't match with the geopolitical reality and has actually set up more barriers than opened more ways for the nation's economic development. This sense of exceptionalism and unwillingness to exercise soft power is especially evident in Britain's attitude towards other European nations, a mentality usually known as Euro-scepticism.

The UK's delay in joining the European Economic Community (EEC), the predecessor of the European Union, and the UK's zealous use of the pound are two of the most significant demonstrations. The EEC is an organization that aims to create a common market for European countries by advocating agreements that aim to improve market competition and reduce unnecessary friction. By any standard, these Policies are beneficial for the UK because they have the potential of strengthening its trade with Europe Mainland. However, London refused to join the EEC when it was established in 1957. The main reason behind this refusal is the desire for sovereignty. The parliament was not interested in the supranational nature of these policies. It believed that these treaties would weaken UK's relationship with its commonwealth countries and prohibit UK from achieving a 'one-world economic system' that uses Pound as the central currency (UK in a Changing Europe, 2023). The decision, which was intended to maintain and strengthen the country's sovereignty, actually trampled its own economic benefits. Another example of the United Kingdom's obstinacy is its refusal to abandon the pound in the face of a superior alternative. In 1999, Euro was established as a universal currency in Europe ("The Euro," 2023). Till now, over 20 of the 27 EU member countries have accepted the currency system. However, even

after the Pound's international status plummeted, UK maintained a contradictory attitude toward the Euro. The main cause for this antagonism is still due to the nation's sovereignty concerns. To be more specific, UK government wants its economy to acquire consistent high competitiveness, and it also desires to retain tight control over its currency's interest rate (Segal, 2023). The United Kingdom's antagonism against the currency doesn't offer British any substantive benefits (Segal, 2023). Instead, it loosens a transaction motorway with most European countries that could significantly increase the overall wealth of British.

ANALYSIS IN RELATION TO COLONIALISM-FREE COUNTRIES

In addition to the military cost and political influences, the issue of whether British would be richer or poorer without colonialism could also be examined by comparing with another European island nation that had consistently opposed colonialism, for example, Ireland. Ireland had long been a victim of colonialism, having been looted by the Vikings, conquered by the Normans, and enveloped under the British crown until, after a two-year Irish Independence War, it eventually seized independence (Alpha History, 2023). Thus, it is not surprising that Ireland, different from UK, had consistently held an anti-colonialist stance and active in promoting corporations with other European nations. According to The Department Of Foreign Affairs of Ireland, the nation's engagement in global affairs pursues economic prosperity, peace, and security of Ireland and the wider world ("Review of Ireland's Foreign Policy and External Relations," 2023). Long been a member of major commerce associations including the EU, Ireland is also one of the first countries to accept the Euro as its legal currency, something that UK never did before Brexit ("Ireland And The Euro," 2023).

These treaties offered Ireland substantial benefits. Before Ireland joined the EU, it was an insignificant island whose economy is heavily agricultural-based and relied on imports from England. The European Union granted Ireland easy access to various profitable markets and assisted Ireland to develop a diverse and technologically-intensive economy. By handling about 40% of Ireland's foreign trade, The association had also assisted Ireland to turn its trade deficit into a significant trade surplus of over 74 billion Euros ("Ireland In The EU," 2023). Currently, the difference in personal GDP of the two countries is considerably large. While the GDP per capita of Ireland is over 100,000 dollars, ranked fourth in the world, the GDP per capita of UK merely exceeds 46,000 dollars ("GDP Per Capita By Country," n.d.), only about half of Ireland's. Thus, it is evident that the British will be much richer if it adapted the diplomatic concept of collaboration instead of colonialism.

COUNTERARGUMENT

All the benefits of a global superior regime come with a cost. Many people believe that colonialism makes British richer because the Colonial Empire provided essential prerequisites for industrialized production that the central isles of the kingdom could not produce in sufficient quantities. America shipped massive amounts of lumber,

tobacco, and dried fish to Britain (Colonial Trade, n.d.), all of which are essential components of British lives, and the East India company supplied UK with an abundant amount of tea required for sustaining the blossoming tea culture (Abolition of the Slave Trade and Slavery in Britain, n.d.). Aside from importing raw materials, the colonies also replenished the kingdom's labor force. During the period when the empire retained absolute control of its American colonies, British merchants were responsible for escorting approximately 3,400,000 African slaves to American farms, accounting for more than half of the transcontinental slave shipment to America (Oldfield, n.d.). The introduction of slaves reduced manufacturing costs while increasing production efficiency. However, it is the great international corporations and state-owned enterprises, like the East India Company, instead of the taxpayers and ordinary people, that benefit from such a vast global empire. The ordinary citizens only suffer from the extremely high tax during the wars and increasingly sharp social contradiction. At the same time, colonialism also binds the British Empire in a shackle of historical infamy that cannot be removed, and it also sparked abysmal hatred against UK and the Britain in many parts of the world trampled and looted under the flag of Red and White strip.

In fact, all the benefits England gained from its worldwide colony empire, such as a vast supply of resources and cheap labor, could also be gained through a stainless and mutually beneficial process: globalization. Through the global commercial network, developed countries' high-technology products could be manufactured at a relatively low price by utilizing the labor force of undeveloped regions. Also, through the global economical platform, resources that are scarce in one region could be replenished by suppliers on the other side of the world. The main difference between globalization and colonialism is that colonialism seeks to extract value by oppressing other nations, whereas globalization is capable of producing a global commerce, labor, technology, and resource chain from which all involved could benefit. Thus, if England was more cooperative with other nations rather than obsessed with colonialism, it would still enjoy the alluring benefits of a global empire while smoothing out many potential economic barriers caused by hatred.

CONCLUSION

All in all, if colonialism truly offered British economical benefits, then where is the wealth deposited? The glorious global empire and the privileges crashed into nothingness as the colonies disintegrated, leaving only reminiscence of the glorious ages when the navy roamed in the seas. Substantially, colonialism bequeathed British nothing. Not a single chest of gold withstood the irresistible tide of history and bore the kingdom's citizens the slightest bonus of wealth. Instead, it is likely that England's citizens would be much wealthier if the country had focused more on domestic issues while indignantly expanding trade with neighboring countries.

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