

Chapter 1 : East India Company - Wikipedia

Company Law in East Asia (review) Clyde Stoltenberg China Review International, Volume 8, Number 1, Spring , pp. (Review) Published by University of Hawai'i Press.

As historian William Dalrymple observes, We still talk about the British conquering India, but that phrase disguises a more sinister reality. It was not the British government that seized India at the end of the 18th century, but a dangerously unregulated private company headquartered in one small office, five windows wide, in London, and managed in India by an unstable sociopath – [Robert] Clive. We give free license to the subjects of the King of Great Britaine, Sir Thomas Smythe, Governor and Company of the East Indian Merchants and Adventurers forever safely come into any of our ports of our Empire of Japan with their shippes and merchandise, without any hindrance to them or their goods, and to abide, buy, sell and barter according to their own manner with all nations, to tarry here as long as they think good, and to depart at their pleasure. The Mughal convoy included the treasure-laden Ganj-i-Sawai , reported to be the greatest in the Mughal fleet and the largest ship operational in the Indian Ocean, and its escort, the Fateh Muhammed. They were spotted passing the straits en route to Surat. Ganj-i-Sawai carried enormous wealth and, according to contemporary East India Company sources, was carrying a relative of the Grand Mughal, though there is no evidence to suggest that it was his daughter and her retinue. When the news arrived in England it caused an outcry. To appease Aurangzeb, the East India Company promised to pay all financial reparations, while Parliament declared the pirates hostis humani generis "enemies of the human race". When the East India Company later doubled that reward, the first worldwide manhunt in recorded history was underway. To appease Emperor Aurangzeb and particularly his Grand Vizier Asad Khan, Parliament exempted Every from all of the Acts of Grace pardons and amnesties it would subsequently issue to other pirates. The company developed a lobby in the English parliament. Under pressure from ambitious tradesmen and former associates of the company pejoratively termed Interlopers by the company , who wanted to establish private trading firms in India, a deregulating act was passed in . The two companies wrestled with each other for some time, both in England and in India, for a dominant share of the trade. The companies merged in , by a tripartite indenture involving both companies and the state, with the charter and agreement for the new United Company of Merchants of England Trading to the East Indies being awarded by the Sidney Godolphin, 1st Earl of Godolphin. In , another act renewed the status of the company, though the debts were repaid. The licence was prolonged until by yet another act in . At this time, Britain and France became bitter rivals. Frequent skirmishes between them took place for control of colonial possessions. In , the Law Officers of the Crown delivered the Pratt-Yorke opinion distinguishing overseas territories acquired by right of conquest from those acquired by private treaty. The opinion asserted that, while the Crown of Great Britain enjoyed sovereignty over both, only the property of the former was vested in the Crown. Demand for Indian commodities was boosted by the need to sustain the troops and the economy during the war, and by the increased availability of raw materials and efficient methods of production. As home to the revolution, Britain experienced higher standards of living. Its spiralling cycle of prosperity, demand and production had a profound influence on overseas trade. The company became the single largest player in the British global market. Saltpetre trade[edit] Saltpetre used for gunpowder was one of the major trade goods of the company. Sir John Banks , a businessman from Kent who negotiated an agreement between the king and the company, began his career in a syndicate arranging contracts for victualling the navy , an interest he kept up for most of his life. So urgent was the need to supply the armed forces in the United Kingdom, America and elsewhere that the authorities sometimes turned a blind eye on the untaxed sales. One governor of the company was even reported as saying in that he would rather have the saltpetre made than the tax on salt. The company took this respite to seize Manila in . Although these small outposts remained French possessions for the next two hundred years, French ambitions on Indian territories were effectively laid to rest, thus eliminating a major source of economic competition for the company. The East India Company had also been granted competitive advantages over colonial American tea importers to sell tea from its colonies in Asia in American colonies. This led to the

Boston Tea Party in which protesters boarded British ships and threw the tea overboard. When protesters successfully prevented the unloading of tea in three other colonies and in Boston, Governor Thomas Hutchinson of the Province of Massachusetts Bay refused to allow the tea to be returned to Britain. This was one of the incidents which led to the American revolution and independence of the American colonies.

Presidency armies and Company rule in India In its first century and half, the EIC used a few hundred soldiers as guards. The great expansion came after , when it had 3, regular troops. By , it had 26,; by , it had 67, It recruited largely Indian troops , and trained them along European lines. As it increased in size the army was divided into the Presidency Armies of Bengal , Madras and Bombay each recruiting their own infantry , cavalry , and artillery units. The navy also grew significantly, vastly expanding its fleet and although made up predominantly of heavily armed merchant vessels, called East Indiamen, it also included warships. Expansion and conquest[edit] The company, fresh from a colossal victory, and with the backing of its own private well-disciplined and experienced army, was able to assert its interests in the Carnatic region from its base at Madras and in Bengal from Calcutta, without facing any further obstacles from other colonial powers. Robert Clive led company forces against Siraj Ud Daulah , the last independent Nawab of Bengal, Bihar , and Midnapore district in Odisha to victory at the Battle of Plassey in , resulting in the conquest of Bengal. That led to the Battle of Buxar. Having sided with the French during the Revolutionary War, the rulers of Mysore continued their struggle against the company with the four Anglo-Mysore Wars. Mysore finally fell to the company forces in , in the fourth Anglo-Mysore war during which Tipu Sultan was killed. The hundred years from the Battle of Plassey in to the Indian Rebellion of were a period of consolidation for the company, during which it seized control of the entire Indian subcontinent and functioned more as an administrator and less as a trading concern. A cholera pandemic began in Bengal, then spread across India by The highest rank to which an Indian soldier could aspire was Subadar-Major or Rissaldar-Major in cavalry units , effectively a senior subaltern equivalent. Promotion for both British and Indian soldiers was strictly by seniority, so Indian soldiers rarely reached the commissioned ranks of Jamadar or Subadar before they were middle aged at best. They received no training in administration or leadership to make them independent of their British officers. There was a systemic disrespect in the company for the spreading of Protestantism , although it fostered respect for Hindu and Muslim , castes.

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