War, State Formation and National Identity on the Fringes of the Atlantic World

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Abstract: *This article looks at the relationship between war, state formation and national identity in England and Ireland. Focusing on the Elizabethan and Stuart periods, I show how English rule was extended over Ireland in a series of wars. As well as ending the possibility of the development of an alternative type of state in Ireland, where a centralised colonial state emerged instead, this also had a profound impact on state formation in Britain. In addition, this process also contributed to a new type of national identity in both countries, which was geographically restricted and based on religion.*

The Concept of the State in British and Irish History

The state has long been at the core of modern social science. History, political science and sociology are all state centred to the extent that the unit of analysis adopted or the political framework in which analysis is carried out are based on existing states. Furthermore, in many works the existing state is projected backwards, with 'History' (whatever that may be) being made to conform to the geographical and cultural requirements of national histories or is made to fit into the boundaries of a modern state. The complexities, twists and contradictions of social processes over many hundreds of years are collapsed and simplified into the history of England, Ireland, France, etc.

The 'History' of England – Britain after 1603 – is illustrative of this. The English state is commonly presumed to have existed more or less unaltered from the invasion of William of Normandy, despite many significant regime changes (the Wars of the Roses and numerous other medieval disputes, the 'English' Civil War, the Jacobite Wars, the emergence of democracy etc.). England is a socio-political concept that is taken for granted. England then is the same as England now[1], likewise the English now are those who have always been English (with the necessary proviso for non-white immigrants from former colonies). The fact that the English crown governed for long periods large parts of France and Ireland that are no longer part of Britain – and that many people in these areas once considered themselves English – is found to be irrelevant by this history shaped by modern states. This is even more ironic considering the fact that England is at present neither a modern state nor a local region. Indeed, officially it may only exist as

an independent entity in football, rugby and some other sports! Furthermore, even before 1603 the English state, as compellingly put by Ellis, was not a nation or national state, rather it was a multi-national, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic state, encompassing English, Welsh, Irish and French:

"In reality, both the English state and its 17th-century successor, the British multiple monarchy, were multi-national states. The Tudor monarchy, for instance, ruled four different peoples (English, Irish, French, Welsh), but the intrusion of modern definitions of nations and national territories fundamentally distorts the context of Tudor monarchical government. The English state is envisaged not as a multi-national state and multiple monarchy, but as a nation-state (and a very precocious one at that!). Yet, it cannot properly be so described after the conquest of Anglo-Saxon England by the dukes of Normandy in 1066 – Wales was added by conquest in the 12th and 13th centuries; half of Ireland in the 13th century, and the rest in the 16th century." (Ellis 101).

Moreover, the Scots would be added to mix after 1603, when James VI of Scotland assumed the English throne, transforming the state into a multiple monarchy consisting of three kingdoms – England, Scotland and Ireland. Furthermore, James' assumption of the throne occurred in the middle of a long process of the re-forging of national identity in different parts of this multiple kingdom. Being English increasingly came to be restricted to those (Protestant in religion) born in England, with the resulting exclusion of long-standing English communities in Ireland and France. In Ireland, correspondingly, a new Irish identity was formed as opposed to the previous identities which differentiated between the Irish English (also Anglo-Irish or Old English) and the Gaelic Irish. Following the defeats of the largely Gaelic Catholic Confederacy of Hugh O'Neill in the Nine Years War (1594-1603), the Catholic Confederacy in the 1640s and the Jacobites in the 1690s, and the resultant social transformations – notably the ever increasing eradication of Catholic landholders – the antagonistic division between Gaelic and Old English Catholics was broken down and replaced with a new category of Catholic Irish.

Illustrative of this is the coining of the word *Éireannaigh* in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. This was the first word for Irish in the Gaelic language. However, although it, on the one hand, pointed to the forging of a (Catholic) Irish *natio*, it also signified the rupture of the Gaelic world. The Gaelic world was characterised by a divided polity with multiple competing nodes of power and a unifying and homogenising culture. It was traditionally divided between the *Gaedhil* and the *Gaill* – the Gaelic people and the others, the foreigners. The area of Gaelic culture, the *Gaeltacht,* covered both Ireland and Scotland. Until the accession of James to the English throne the impact of this political division on the Gaelic world was mitigated by the inability of both London and Edinburgh to impose their will on their Gaelic peripheries. The unification of the English and Scottish thrones under James represented the beginning of the rupture of the Gaelic world, mostly due to the collapse of Gaelic military power and autonomy following the defeat of Hugh O'Neill and his flight to the continent in 1607, as well as attacks on Gaelic power in the highlands of Scotland.

Similar complexities can be identified for almost any current European state – including those at the core of the European state system. States altered forms considerably. Nation states, city-states, trade leagues and multiple kingdoms overlapped, intermingled and completed with each other. In the end the nation state (or as better expressed by Tilly, the national state) triumphed. Moreover, due to the colonial Empires of the European national states, this form of state has become dominant throughout the world. Yet even the concept of the nation or national state involves a vast array of different state forms. These include traditional nation states such as Ireland or Finland, multiple/composite states such as the United Kingdom or Spain, modern city states, Singapore for example, continental states such as the United States and Brazil, and huge multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural states such as China or Russia, with the latter offering a multitude of spheres of powers and levels of autonomies.

This causes a difficulty for historians and other social scientists – deciding the appropriate macro unit of analysis. Social science tends to be shaped and structured by current national states. Although this has advantages, it can also create difficulties, especially when any sort of historical analysis is needed.

None of the above is intended to question the importance of the state, or its centrality in social science. To the contrary I see the state as being a fundamental concept, but it should not be understood as something that is transcendent or 'eternal' and unchanging. States are social institutions, socially constructed institutions. Although they have a significant degree of permanence and institutional stability, states are dynamic. They evolve and change. For example, the modern British state, which has lost its empire and has fallen from its leading role on the world stage – and whose per capita GDP has been exceeded by that of its former colony the Republic of Ireland – is obviously not the same as the English state of Henry VIII, which included England and Wales (though not Scotland) as well English territories in Ireland and Calais. Nor is it the same as the British state in the 1940s, which was still a world power and still had an empire. Another example of the significant changes that can occur in states – even within short periods of time – can be found by comparing the Western European welfare states of the 1950s and 1960s with their counterparts in the first decades of the twenty-first century, when the welfare state has been substantially modified.

States are not reified institutions that are somehow frozen in time. Rather, as I have indicated above, they are institutions that are constructed, adapted, changed, reformed and destroyed through social processes. An infinite number of factors contribute to the social process of state formation, both internal and external. These can include financial and economic factors, religious factors, natural disasters, cultural changes, ideologies, or even wars and invasions. Also of crucial importance are relationships between and within elites and other significant social groups. I believe that the role and structure of the contemporary state cannot be properly understood without being aware of the historical process which a particular state has undergone. Thus, the particular nature of the state in Ireland – where the state is extremely centralized and powerful, though its 'power' is

hidden to a large extent – cannot be understood in separation from the country's colonial relationship with Britain, especially the centralized nature of British administration, the role of Catholicism and the impact of the War of Independence and the Civil War.

Furthermore, when looking at the process of state formation in an individual country (or nation, region, or state), we need to be able to identify the key periods in this process. In relation to European states many historians take the end of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century to be one of these key periods – roughly speaking the age of the wars of religion. Other key periods were the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era (1789-1815) and the 1930s and 1940s. When we turn to individual countries, especially ones that are on the periphery, these periods can be somewhat different. In the case of Ireland, as I have argued in my doctoral thesis, the essential turning point was the Nine Years War (1594-1603) which saw the final English conquest of country and the subjugation of the autonomous Gaelic lordships[2]. This hard fought victory is of such importance to Ireland because it represented the end of a potential alternative model of development. Furthermore, it was also of crucial importance to the future development of the English state – though this point seems only to have been acknowledge by Irish or Irish based historians and ignored by most English ones[3] – because defeat may have endangered the Stuart succession to the English throne and probably would have imposed some checks on Stuart absolutism. Victory also assured access to the west – to the Americas and beyond. It is very probable that had the Confederates led by Hugh O'Neill not been defeated, the British Empire would have been far different and far smaller. Finally, victory was achieved at a huge financial cost, bequeathed to the Stuarts and of great significance in undermining relations between English elites in the 1630s and 1640s. It also introduced a destabilising element (Ireland) into the British polity – a question that despite significant advances in recent years has still not been fully resolved[4].

State Formation in Colony and Metropole: England and Ireland in the Long Seventeenth Century

English intervention in Ireland began in the twelfth century. Ironically, as in the Elizabethan era, the first Irish policy of the English crown was driven by private individuals. Initially uninterested in the country (to which he had conveniently been granted lordship by the Pope) Henry II only actually got involved following the success of some of his knights in the country, when there was a possibility that some of these lords might actually set up an independent kingdom. Although the Anglo-Normans rapidly conquered large parts of the country, they failed to win control of the whole country. Furthermore, despite the influx of a relatively large number of colonists over a number of generations, the previous Gaelic culture was never completely replaced, even in areas controlled by Anglo-Norman lords. In fact, the opposite happened in many cases. The new lords adopted Gaelic customs and culture, becoming in the famous – but perhaps not completely accurate phrase – 'more Irish than the Irish themselves'.

Within a century or so of the Norman invasion, the colonists were on the defensive. In the west and north of Ireland, Gaelic lords managed to push back Anglo-Norman control, with the decline and collapse of the Earldom of Ulster being especially notable. The Gaelic recovery was partially due to timing – the attention of the English crown was focused on France, while the Anglo-Norman lords themselves were bitterly divided. Another important factor was external intervention. From the thirteenth onwards Gaelic lords began to import mercenaries from the Isles and Highlands of Scotland (the Gallowglasses), while at the beginning of the fourteenth century Edward Bruce, brother of Robert, landed in Ireland. Although Bruce was defeated his intervention seriously weakened the English colony.

By the beginning of the Tudor era, Ireland was more or less divided into three broad, flexible zones. First, the Pale – also known as the English Pale –, the eastern coastal and midlands region centring around the counties of Dublin, Kildare and Meath; English by culture and to a certain extent accepting the rule of the government in Dublin. Also part of this zone (though with much more privileges and autonomy) were the cities and corporate towns elsewhere in the country, especially in the south. The second zone was composed the lordships of the old English (or Irish English) magnates, the three earldoms of Kildare, Desmond and Ormond, but also numerous other smaller lordships. Though possessing greater autonomy than the Pale, these lordships were relatively amicable towards the government – once their autonomy and privileges were respected. The final zone was the Gaelic (or Gaelicised) lordships, the O'Neills and O'Donnells in Ulster, the O'Briens and MacCarthys in Munster, the MacWilliam Burkes in Connaught, the O'Byrnes in Wicklow. Despite possessing great autonomy, these lordships were not necessarily opposed to the government (indeed many minor lords were favourably disposed to the government, seeing a government in Dublin or London as preferable to an overlord nearer home), once autonomy and privilege – and later religion – were respected. However, successive Tudor monarchs proved unable to do this provoking a series of convulsions in the country. It should also be noted that these three zones were not mutually exclusive and that there was considerable interaction between them[6].

In a similar way the population of Ireland was divided between the Gaelic Irish[6] and the Old English, with the latter composing most of the inhabitants of the cities and the Pale. There was much intermixing between these groups. This is widely recorded among noble families and presumably it took place among the more invisible classes. Indeed, one of the main criticisms aimed at the Old English by the English and the new settlers in Ireland – called the New English – was that they had degenerated into Irish, The most eloquent of the new settlers, the poet Spenser, specifically identifies the use of Gaelic wet-nurses as being responsible for this degeneration: "they moreover draw into themselves, together with their sucke, even the nature and disposition of their nurses: for the minde followeth much the temperature of the body" (1997: 71).

For the Tudors the situation in Ireland – especially due to the continued existence of 'overmighty subjects' (whether Gaelic or English speaking) – was ideologically and politically unacceptable, a situation that was aggravated by the English crown's forced

reliance on some of these 'overmighty subjects' to rule the country. Moreover, the fact that Ireland was used as the springboard for several invasions of England by Yorkist pretenders and by England's continental enemies to stir up trouble, made the curbing of the autonomy of the Irish lordships an urgent strategic necessity. Yet this proved to be an immensely complex and costly enterprise, one that destabilised the Tudor regime and whose resolution fatally undermined the Stuarts. The blame for this lies with the Tudor monarchs, especially Elizabeth whose regime was probably the bloodiest in Irish history[7].

The political situation in Ireland was further complicated by the Reformation. Although Henry VIII's split with Rome was initially rather passively accepted, further more radical reforms failed. In contrast, despite a rather lukewarm reception at the beginning, the Counter-Reformation made great progress, with both the Gaelic Irish and Old English remaining Catholic. This contributed to the change of attitudes in England towards the Old English, whose loyalty to the state now came to be suspected. The Old English community to the contrary, despite rejecting the established church, still clung to their Englishness and to their concept of loyalty. They remained loyal to the English monarch (after 1534 also king – or queen – of Ireland), but they also refused to give up their political and economic privileges, resisting as far as possible the absolutist tendencies of the London regime. It was this sense of loyalty that prevented the Old English nobility from supporting Hugh O'Neill's Catholic Confederacy in the Nine Year's War, though it did allow them to participate in the Confederation of Kilkenny in the 1640s, which was, at least ostensibly, royalist.

Although both Old English and the 'New English' advocated the reform of Gaelic Ireland, their idea of reform were considerably different. Generally speaking, the Old English tended to favour political reform based on general humanist principals. The New English, however, influenced by Puritan and Calvinists ideals, tended, especially by the end of the sixteenth century, to favour the sword as a means of reform. A near-genocidal policy was advocated, which, as the situation in the country got steadily more complex, got steadily more radical. By the 1590s many, especially new settlers, wanted to root out and exterminate Gaelic culture, lords and the Gaelic upper class. Various rebellions and conflicts, especially the Desmond Wars and the Nine Years War, provided ample opportunities for these policies to be implemented.

A further complicating factor was the 'privatised' nature of the state. The English government was fundamentally corrupt. Offices were bought and sold – and once an individual occupied a position it was often very difficult to dislodge them. Since the price of offices was high, and salaries low, the most obvious way to recoup 'investments' was through corruption. This also encouraged state officials to pursue their own interests, even to the detriment of state policy[8]. Although in London and England it was possible to control government officials to a certain extent, in Ireland, to the contrary, officials and army officers were often able to build up small empires, such as those of Richard Bingham in Connaught and George Carew in Munster. The impact of the activities of

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officials concerned with enriching themselves was considerable, undermining the trust of Gaelic lords in the state. For example, the corruption of William Fitzwilliam, lord deputy in the early 1590s, was one of the causes of the outbreak of hostilities between the state and Hugh O'Neill's confederates.

The Nine Years War (1594-1603) was the essential turning point in modern Irish history – and one of the most important in British history. What began as a regional conflict involving a coalition of disaffected Gaelic lords was turned by the *virtù* of the Gaelic leader, Hugh O'Neill, and the incompetence of Elizabeth and her government, into a nationwide war that became part of the continent wide struggle between Spain and its allies on one hand and the Netherlands, England and France, on the other hand. The success of the Gaelic confederacy threatened English rule in Ireland – and the structure of the English state itself. Gaelic victory (or 'non-defeat') would probably have resulted in a much less centralised state where a number of quasi-autonomous lordships, and potential sources of opposition to the state, would have continued to exist. This in turn would have hindered the extension of English law and the cash nexus throughout the country. Due to the Spanish contribution to the Gaelic war effort, Confederate victory would most likely have introduced a significant non-English presence into the polity, representing another potential source of hostility/conflict. This could well have hindered the accession of James VI of Scotland to the English throne, since the Spanish monarchy had a competing claim.

A final – and from an international point of view perhaps the most important – potential impact in related to the future trajectory of England/Britain as an international imperial power. Geo-politically Ireland was both a route to attack England and the latter's gateway to the west. Throughout the middle ages and for most of the Tudor period, English monarchs looked east to France and the continent. English trade was also European orientated. During the final decades of the sixteenth century, after the loss of the final English foothold in France, and attracted by opportunities of piracy and plunder in Spanish possessions, the strategic viewpoint of the English state began to shift westwards. Nevertheless, this viewpoint was still dominated by war with Spain, with the main fighting taking place in the Netherlands, Brittany and Ireland. It was only after Ireland had been fully subdued that the path was open for England to become a global power. Furthermore, as shown by Canny (1988) and others, English (and British) colonial experiences in the New World were intimately linked with those in Ireland. The plantations in Ireland, especially in Ulster and Munster, absorbed far more people and resources than those in the Americas during the seventeenth century. They were also far more successful – and to a certain extent less risky. In addition, many of the same people were involved in colonisation schemes in Ireland and the New World, with experiences and skills learned in Ireland being put to good use in the Americas. There were also ideological links, with many of those involved in colonial ventures in Ireland and the Americas providing the same ideological justifications for their actions.

In relation to future paths of state development in Ireland, the victory of the government in the Nine Years War represents the end of possible alternative paths, such as the emergence of an 'Irish' state. Instead, Ireland was now fully subdued to the English state, becoming a centralized colonial state, rather than a sister kingdom where the rule of law was based on coercion[9], the old rights and privileges of the loyal Catholic community were eroded, a parliamentary majority was constructed among Protestant settlers, and land ownership reverted more and more through extra-legal and economic processes to the new settlers. Furthermore, despite the concerns of numerous writers about the abuses of Gaelic law and the need to civilise the Gaelic Irish and thereby 'improve' them, once Gaelic Ireland no longer seemed a threat these concerns fell by the wayside. Indeed, several important Gaelic lords, such as Cormac MacBaron, the brother of Hugh O'Neill, and Niall Garbh O'Donnell, were imprisoned for life without charge. Others were executed on trumped up charges. Thus, the colonised, once conquered, were subject to a new form of warfare – in which the main weapons were legal. English law was used to attack and remove inconvenient legal mechanisms from the previous system, as well as to weaken land tenure, to undermine the power of individual lords and to weaken opposition. In his interesting study of this 'legal imperialism', Pawlish (1985) has pointed out how, based on the experience acquired in Ireland, similar experiences were later tried by the British in future colonies and conquest.

Naturally this created a reaction. The Gaelic Irish and Old English were not passive receptors of the fundamental changes that were occurring. Rather, there were a wide range of political, military, religious and ideological reactions. Large numbers of Gaelic Irish and Old English went to the continent, especially to Spanish possessions. Some joined the Irish regiments of the Army of Flanders, or became permanent political exiles. Others sought an education or became priests in the numerous Irish colleges set up on the continent. This contributed to a sort of Gaelic renaissance where scholars (who were usually in religious orders) attempted on the one hand to preserve their culture, and on the other contributed to the formation of an Irish identity. The word *Éireannaigh*, the Gaelic for Irish, a word that had never previously existed, was coined at this time. The new identity was based on Catholicism, rather than on ethnicity. The previous divisions between Gaelic and Old English were eroded, eventually being replaced with a new category – Catholic Irish. However, this identity would only assume full embodiment at the end of the seventeenth century, and conflict between both groups continued, to the detriment of both. Furthermore, it was formed in opposition to the state. Despite attempts to find accommodation with the protestant state, loyal Catholics were ultimately unsuccessful. Their loyalty was rejected by an increasingly anti-Catholic English polity which both suspected Catholics and refused to accept the Old English as English[10].

The convulsions of the English state during the regime of Charles I further complicated matters. Stuart political and religious absolutism allowed no room for compromise, despite the fact that this was sorely needed because of the appalling financial situation of the English crown – much of which can be traced to the Nine Years War. This led to conflict in England between crown and parliament, and between the crown and the Scottish religious covenanters. Attempts to use Catholic Irish to aid Charles in

his war with the covenanters failed and Charles was forced to make a humiliating peace. Then war broke out in Ireland following the rising of Catholic nobility in Ulster in 1641, which rapidly spread throughout the island. The reasons for this rebellion are complex, but in short seem to rest on the collapse of the trust of the Catholic elites in the crown, the widespread fear among Catholics of the virulently anti-Catholic parliament in Westminster, and the fact that much of the Catholic Irish gentry were heavily in debt. The 1641 Rising in Ireland was the direct trigger of the English Civil War – now referred to as the Wars of the Three Kingdoms.

England, Scotland and Ireland were torn apart by war during the 1640s. Ireland suffered the most though. Despite the Confederation of Kilkenny which brought together the Gaelic Irish and Old English, mutual suspicions and divisions fatally undermined this unity. Weakened by faction fights of bewildering complexity, and by the death of their best military commander, Eoghan Ruadh O'Neill, the nephew of Hugh, the Confederates were no match for Cromwell when he landed in Ireland in 1649. Two years later Ireland had been fully subdued and Cromwell had earned the highest place on the Irish pedestal of hate. Victory was followed by further plantations and colonisation scheme. Large numbers of Catholic landholders lost their lands, some being sent to the poorest Irish province, Connaught, while many soldiers and women and children were sent as slaves or indentured labour to the new English colonies in the West Indies.

Despite the hopes of Irish Catholic royalists, the Cromwellian land settlement was confirmed after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. The accession of the Catholic James II to the throne appeared to threaten this settlement – certainly many Catholics and Protestants believed this. Although some anti-Catholic legislation was repealed in Ireland, and there were plans to revise the land question, the overthrow of James II was essentially due to, despite the eloquent propaganda to the contrary, anti-Catholic bigotry. Consequently it dramatically worsened the position of Catholics in Ireland. After the surrender of the Jacobite forces in Ireland in 1691, and the subsequent departure of large number of soldiers into exile, the infamous anti-Catholic Penal Laws were introduced in Ireland. This resulted in the virtual elimination of the Catholic nobility in Ireland and of Catholic landholding in general.

State Formation and the Emergence of National Identity in Ireland and Britain

The period 1590-1691 was the key period in the formation of modern states in Ireland and Britain. Whereas in 1590 Scotland was an independent kingdom, and Ireland still had an ambiguous relationship with England, and possessed a considerable degree of autonomy, in 1691 all three were united under the same crown, Ireland had been fully conquered (three times), the autonomous lordships had been eliminated and Gaelic political culture had been virtually eliminated in Ireland (and within sixty years they would suffer the same fate in Scotland). The kingdom of Ireland had been transformed

into a colony. Furthermore, the social and economic structure of Ireland had also been transformed. Despite the fact that the majority of the country was Catholic, virtually all the land was held by Protestants, in addition, the previous division between Gaelic Irish and Old English had been replaced by a new Irish identity based on Catholicism. Similarly, a new English identity had emerged, based on Protestantism and which explicitly rejected the claims of Old English to be English, since by stubbornly remaining Catholic they had degenerated into Irish.

In the following two centuries Britain would become a world power, with an empire that spanned the globe. The path to becoming the dominant power in the world was opened by the English victory in the Nine Years War. Yet at the same time the subjugation of Ireland, the 'colonisation' of Ireland, created an Irish problem for Britain. Despite progress made in the last decade, this problem has yet to be resolved. Furthermore, the incorporation of Ireland also aggravated the tensions inherent in the British state, creating a British problem – how to forge a unity among three states (and four nationalities if the Welsh are included) that had forcibly been brought together. In the long run this proved impossible because of the Catholic Irish. This does not mean that the Catholic Irish were consistently opposed to the idea of Britain or the British Empire. To the contrary, many Catholic Irish willingly participated and took advantage of this. However, the core ideological bundles that were used to unify, to 'create' and 'invent' Britain systematically excluded the Catholic Irish (as well as creating various contradictions for Catholic English and Scots). These axes were centred around the intermeshed themes of the crown, religion (Protestantism, both Anglicanism and Calvinism, and anti-Catholicism), the British Empire and its civilising colonial mission, a very Calvinistic sense of density and belief that the English (and to a certain extent the Scots and the Welsh) were God's chosen people, (and corresponding discrimination/racism against those peoples who had not been so fortunate), belief in the settlement of the so-called 'Glorious Revolution', as well as a sense that British was equivalent with English. These principles – which had a very real impact on the formation of the state in England and in Ireland – fatally undermined the long-term incorporation of Ireland within Britain[11].

It is interesting to compare the consistent difficulties with the incorporation of Ireland into Britain with their relative absence in Scotland. Like Ireland, Scotland had a Gaelic fringe that was similarly despised by the civilised inhabitants of Edinburgh. Its political elite were also descendants of colonists and English speaking. Unlike Ireland, Scotland was an independent kingdom. Yet this independence was given up relatively easily. Although there were a series of Jacobite rebellions in the eighteenth century, these did not (including the most successful, the 'Forty-Five') really threaten the British state. Furthermore, these rebellions involved only a small number of Scots and were not aimed at winning Scotland independence, but at restoring the Stuarts to the crown of the Three Kingdoms. Finally, the Republic of Ireland exists today as a sovereign state, Scotland does not. Three points need to be considered in any explanation of this. First, whereas the Protestant reformation failed in Ireland, it was successful in Scotland. Second, while in Ireland Gaelic, Old English and New English all intermingled, in Scotland the

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geographic distinction between the Gaelic (the Irish speaking) Scots and the civilised Scots was much sharper, allowing the isolation of Gaelic Scotland, and letting English speaking Scotland exist and operate as if Gaelic Scotland did not exist. Third, while in Scotland once the Gaelic culture had been destroyed, stereotypes of its images and representations could be appropriated (most notably the kilt)[12], in Ireland this did not occur. The Gaelic savage did not become – except in nationalist, anti-British, literature – the noble savage. Contrast, by way of example, the romanticised version of the Highlanders, where the descendants of the House of Hanover could/can put on kilts and 'become' Scottish (but never Gaelic), with the apelike cartoons and portrayals of the Irish commonly found in nineteenth and twentieth century English literature.

Conclusion: the State and National Identity

In summary, the period in question (1590-1691) was vital for the formation of the state in Britain and Ireland. It involved a number of not always successful and sometimes contradictory processes. These included the strengthening of the power of the government vis-à-vis local nobles and local sources of power, such as cities and corporate towns. Yet in many ways this extension of state power was self-defeating as it trigged off crises and wars that involved massive financial outlays, restricted the freedom of the monarch to act and imposed agreements with other power sources. In addition, especially at the beginning of the period in question, state power was privatised to a considerable degree. Many offices (including military ones) were bought and sold – and holders enjoyed a considerable degree of protection from removal, even against the monarch –, while office holders were often more interested (and able) to pursue actions involving their own interests. Another important process was the reworking of national identities. While in Ireland a new national identity was formed to incorporate both Gaelic Irish and the Old English tied together by their Catholicism, in England a religious based identity was also formed, though this was used more to exclude people from Englishness, especially the Old English who were seen as having degenerated into Irish[13]. There was an ideological factor tied to the religious question. Inspired by Calvinism, many English came to see the Gaelic Irish (and then all the Catholic Irish) as something less than human to whom the rules of civilised warfare did not apply, thereby making legitimate horrific means of war as seen in the Nine Years War and the Cromwellian Wars. This in turn probably contributed to the 'colonial' ideology, which ignored the previous historical existence of Ireland as a kingdom under the British crown, and whose citizens were therefore entitled to the protection of the law, to seeing the country instead as 'sword land', as a place to be conquered, plundered, exploited, the traditions and entitlements of loyal elites notwithstanding. Despite the success of the new 'conquest' of Ireland and the displacement of its Catholic elites, the incorporation of Ireland into Britain presented a political and ideological challenge – one that in the long term was unable to be met.

A final point worth considering is that although in this article I have discussed the history of Britain and Ireland, I am also dealing with world history. In a way the history of the modern world was decided in early 1602. English victory in the Nine Years War resulted in the full control of Ireland for the first time and prevented the emergence of an alternative path of development, a possible 'Gaelic State'. This in turn permitted and encouraged a turn to the West, away from the European continent among English elites and towards a process that would result in the British Empire. Had the Gaelic forces not been defeated at Kinsale, it is extremely likely that the future British Empire and the path followed by the English state would have been different, with considerable consequences for the rest of the world.

Notes

1 In 2005 on H-Albion, an important academic discussion list of British and Irish history, the statement that the last invasion of England had been that of William the Conqueror went unacknowledged. This important historical 'fact', the date of the founding of modern England – and its *de facto* separation from 'the continent' is somewhat contradicted by a long line of military interventions: numerous military interventions from abroad occurred throughout the medieval era culminating with the invasion of England by Henry Tudor in 1485, subsequent Yorkists invasions from Ireland, the invasion of England by William of Orange in 1689 – perhaps the last successful invasion of the country – and the Jacobite invasion in 1745-6.

2 Ó Néill, Eoin, 2005, *O Estado Que Nunca Foi: guerra e formação do estado na Irlanda do século XVI*, Doctoral dissertation, IUPERJ, 2005.

3 In the majority of histories concerned with the Elizabethan era (with the notable exception of Wallace MacCaffery) the war in Ireland is either largely ignored with the exception of some generic mentions and footnotes, or discussed in a chapter by an Irish author. Admittedly in 'post-Pocock' academic history there has been some attempt to tackle the non-English (in the contemporary sense) part of the English/British state, nevertheless 'popular' Elizabethan history continues to conveniently ignore Ireland.

4 Bradshaw has referred to Ireland as "*the* British problem" (1998: 112).

5 Steven Ellis has argued that parts of England, notably the upland border regions in the north were very similar to the Gaelic (and some of the Old English) lordships in Ireland, in that they were outside the political, social and economic core, similar social conditions existed (continual small scale raiding, the existence of 'name groups', collective punishments, etc), and lords were semi-autonomous. However, no matter what radical and harsh solutions were implemented to discipline these areas – which included transplantation to Ireland! – they were still not as harsh as those implemented in Ireland during the Nine Years and Confederate Wars, which amounted to genocide in some cases. (See Ellis, 1995)

6 It is very interesting to note that there is – after so many hundred years of contact, going back even before there was an English language! – no proper noun for the Gaelic Irish, with the exception of the nineteenth century 'Gaels'. It is also worthwhile noting that the Irish for English is Sasanagh, literally Saxon,

7 Elizabeth – 'Gloriana' and 'Good Queen Bess' – is still highly regarded in England. In 2005 the BBC ran a competition to name the best Britons and she came in the top ten. (See: http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/10_october/19/great_britons.shtml accessed on 17 December 2006).

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8   These attitudes and actions went all the way to the highest levels. For example, as Kerney Walsh shows, in the first decade of the seventeenth century several members of the Privy Council (the equivalent of the cabinet) were receiving 'pensions' from the Spanish. (1986: 31-2).

9   See: Edwards, David. 2004. "Legacy of defeat: the reduction of Gaelic Ireland after Kinsale." In: Morgan, Hiram (ed.). 2004. *The Battle of Kinsale*. Wicklow: Wordwell.

10 See: Caball, Marc. 1998. "Faith, Culture and Sovereignty: Irish Nationality and its Development, 1558-1625." in: Bradshaw, Brendan. 1998. *British Consciousness and Identity: The making of Britain, 1533-1707*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; and Lock, Julian. 1996. "'How Many Tercios has the Pope?' The Spanish war and the sublimation of Elizabethan Anti-Popery." *History: The Journal of the Historical Association*. Vol. 81, 261, 1996.

11 An example of this can be seen in the Curragh incident in early 1914 when 60 British officers stationed in Ireland resigned their commissions in the army rather than having to enforce the Home Rule (i.e., the restoration of a parliament in Dublin) that had been passed by the Westminster parliament and which was supposed to come into effect at the end of 1914. These resignations were not accepted and no officers were punished in the only blatantly political intervention of the British army in modern times. Home Rule was postponed upon the outbreak of World War I.

12 See: Trevor-Roper, Hugh. 1983. "The invention of tradition: the Highland tradition of Scotland." in: Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence (eds). 1983. *The Invention of Tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

13 And also, ironically, at a later date the descendants of the New English who became 'Anglo-Irish' and more recently British, but never English.

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