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Anti-Standing Army Ideology, Identity, and Ideas of Union within the British Isles, 1689–1714

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Abstract

Traditionally, anti-standing army ideology in the 1690s and 1700s has been viewed primarily through an English prism. As a result of the unique contribution of Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, the place of Scotland has also been examined in this regard, particularly in relation to the ‘paper war’ of 1697–9. However, Ireland also loomed larger than has previously been acknowledged within the associated debates. This was evident both in the arguments advanced and in the writers who advanced them. Several individuals with close connections to Ireland – both Anglo-Irish and English Protestants – figured prominently among the anti-standing army writers, including Robert Molesworth, John Trenchard, Sir Francis Brewster, and Henry Maxwell. That they did so requires explanation, given that the army in Ireland offered the minority Protestant ruling elite the greatest security against a Catholic Jacobite rebellion. The involvement of these men in anti-standing army debates also highlights their engagement in an Irish Protestant context with the idea of a Gothic constitution and the extent to which their writings contributed to the post-Glorious Revolution whig canon. Yet the debates also highlight the limitations of such ideology when faced with the question of Irish identity and confessional allegiance, the constitutional relationship with England, and the presence of a standing army in Ireland. One proposed solution to such limitations was political Union.

I

Those writing against standing armies in the early modern period portrayed permanent professional forces as the tools of tyrants, oppressors, and absolutist monarchs. English aversion to a permanent army was long-established and was associated, among other things, with political corruption and Catholicism, or more specifically popery, which, it was argued, provided the ideological

underpinning for arbitrary and authoritarian government, with absolutist Catholic France often used as the exemplar.¹

The denunciation of standing armies emerged as part of a wider set of ideas centred on the inalienable liberty of the subject that was – depending on the viewpoint – bestowled by either an ancient Saxon or Gothic constitution or derived from classical Greek city-states and republican Rome.² Such ideas were most famously espoused in seventeenth-century England by James Harrington, John Milton, and Algernon Sydney. Although the key English text in that regard – Harrington’s *Oceana* of 1656 – was anti-monarchical and dismissed both the ancient Saxon and Gothic constitutions, post-Restoration adherents of such ideas, as epitomized by Andrew Marvell and Henry Neville, chose instead to promote arguments based upon the idea of a ‘mixed’ or ‘free monarchy’ centred on a balance between crown, Lords, and Commons, which they argued was in fact derived from (as they variously best saw fit) England’s ancient Saxon or Gothic constitutions.³

Central to such ideas were the obligations of the citizen or freeholder within society and within government, including serving in the militia in defence of the ‘free state’ or ‘free monarchy’. This in turn negated the need for a standing or mercenary army, which in any case could not be trusted.⁴

Ireland presented certain problems for those advocating such anti-standing army ideology in the British Isles in the 1690s and early 1700s. The British army stationed in Ireland during and after the Williamite–Jacobite war of 1689–91 had demonstrated that it offered the minority Irish Protestant ruling elite the greatest security against any future Catholic Jacobite rebellion. From 1692 onwards, a permanent professional force of 12,000 men was maintained within the country and paid for from Irish public revenues as part of the ongoing military logistics of the Grand Alliance in the continuing continental war against France. Following the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697 and the passage of the English Disbandment Act, the Irish parliament agreed to continue to fund this standing army from Irish public income and initiated an innovative project for building a permanent country-wide network of residential army barracks for the purpose. Such large numbers of soldiers had never before been maintained in Ireland in peacetime, and the willingness of the Irish parliament to facilitate such a dramatic change of practice was to prove highly significant in

¹ L. G. Schworer, ‘No standing armies!’ *The anti-army ideology in seventeenth-century England* (Baltimore, MD, 1974), passim; J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition* (2nd pbk edn, Princeton, NJ, 2003), pp. 410–13.

² Ashley Walsh, ‘The Saxon republic and ancient constitution in the standing army controversy, 1697–1699’, *Historical Journal*, 62 (2019), pp. 663–84.

³ See in general Rachel Hammersley, *Republicanism: an introduction* (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 15–92, 104–6; Pocock, *Machiavellian moment*, pp. 405–21; Walsh, ‘Saxon republic’, pp. 663, 669–70; John Roberston, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the militia issue* (Edinburgh, 1985), pp. 14–16; Robert Molesworth, *An account of Denmark, with Francogallia and some considerations for the promoting of agriculture and employing the poor*, ed. Justin Champion (Indianapolis, IN, 2011), pp. 174–5.

⁴ Quentin Skinner, ‘Two concepts of citizenship’, *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 55 (1993), pp. 403–19, at pp. 412–13; Walsh, ‘Saxon republic’, pp. 672–6.

terms of the role and place of Ireland within the wider contexts of the eighteenth-century British fiscal-military state and the growth of empire.⁵

A second complication arose over the constitutional relationship with England. In theory a sister kingdom of England, the kingdom of Ireland was in reality subordinated in a number of ways, despite having its own parliament and replicating other key governmental institutions. The Irish government was overseen by a viceroy and was ultimately answerable to London, while the Irish parliament's enactment of Poynings' Law in 1494–5 had created a dominant role for the English and Irish privy councils within the Irish legislative process. At the same time, the English parliament had assumed for itself a right to legislate for Ireland.⁶

A third complication arose from the fact that in the officially Protestant kingdom of Ireland the vast majority of the population was Catholic. Following the war of 1689–91, Catholics were prevented from sitting in parliament and from 1695 onwards a series of penal laws began to be enacted on a par with those already in existence in England. These laws removed a range of rights relating to religious worship, property ownership, education, guardianship, legal practice, and civil and military service.⁷

As a subordinate kingdom willingly supporting a standing army and legislating to exclude the majority of the population from the rights and liberties central in particular to Gothic constitutional thought, Ireland represented a challenge for advocates of anti-standing army ideology in the 1690s and early 1700s. The various endeavours of a range of writers to surmount those challenges reveals the limitations of such ideology when faced with the question of Irish identity and confessional allegiance, while also highlighting the place of Gothic thought with regard to Ireland's constitutional relationship with England.

II

Despite these Irish complications, it was in fact an Anglo-Irish Protestant, Robert Molesworth, who was the first to take to print in the 1690s on the issue of anti-standing army ideology. Having fled Ireland with his family in 1688 for English exile, Molesworth's active support for William III ultimately resulted in his appointment as English envoy to Denmark in 1689. His difficulties there prompted Molesworth to write *An account of Denmark*, which was published in late 1693.⁸ The book looked to 'establish how tyranny worked, identifying the contaminating ideologies and institutions'.⁹ In Denmark's case, the establishment of absolute monarchy in 1660 was the precursor to the introduction of a standing army that had caused the financial ruin of

⁵ C. I. McGrath, *Ireland and empire, 1692–1770* (London, 2021), pp. 69–166.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 37–67.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 19–35.

⁸ See D. W. Hayton, 'The personal and political contexts of Robert Molesworth's *Account of Denmark*', in Knud Haakonssen and Henrik Horstbøll, eds., *Northern antiquities and national identities: perceptions of Denmark and the north in the eighteenth century* (Copenhagen, 2008), pp. 541–67.

⁹ Justin Champion, 'Introduction', in Molesworth, *Account*, p. xii.

the nobility, gentry, and lower orders because of the need for excessive taxation for its maintenance.¹⁰

Molesworth's purpose in writing *An account* was in part to warn Englishmen of what he believed was the very real potential for the same to happen to them, especially in light of the fact that Denmark too was a Protestant country.¹¹ For Molesworth, such a threat arose in particular from the continued survival in English political life of crypto-Catholicism, popery, Jacobitism, and the 'priestcraft' of high Anglican clergymen and associated tory laymen.¹² *An account* was ultimately to place Molesworth as a leading figure among an emerging cadre of 'old', 'real', or 'country' whigs associated with the Grecian Tavern in London in the 1690s and early 1700s, who espoused an amalgam of ideas garnered from earlier English thinkers such as Sydney and Harrington, while also producing a whig canon among themselves.¹³

It was this same whig grouping that took an anti-standing army stance alongside the tories in both parliament and the press in 1697–9. The rhetoric of these two groups was in part influenced by Molesworth's *Account*.¹⁴ The issue arose because of William III's desire to keep a large part of his wartime army in service in peacetime following the conclusion of the War of the Grand Alliance in late 1697. From the outset, the pamphlet debate included arguments relating to Ireland, some of which evidently influenced ensuing arguments in parliament.¹⁵ The first salvo in print, *An argument, showing that a standing army is inconsistent with a free government*, was written by John Trenchard, an English landowner with prior connections to Ireland from his time as a student at Trinity College Dublin in the mid-1680s.¹⁶ The pamphlet is sometimes ascribed to both Trenchard and Walter Moyle, an MP and writer who was said to act as amanuensis for the former.¹⁷

Published in October 1697 with the intention of influencing MPs in the lead up to the meeting of parliament in December, *An argument* reiterated the key components of seventeenth-century English anti-standing army ideology regarding the Gothic constitution and the centrality therein of a militia of freeholders.¹⁸ In giving examples of the tyranny associated with standing armies, Trenchard referenced Denmark, as recently related by that 'excellent author'.¹⁹ By so alluding to Molesworth's *Account*, Trenchard looked to reinforce the message that Catholic countries did not have a monopoly on tyranny – it could happen to Protestant England too. In a similar vein, the anonymous author

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 51–2, 90–2, 160.

¹¹ Caroline Robbins, *The eighteenth-century commonwealthman* (Cambridge, MA, 1959), pp. 94–5.

¹² See Hayton, 'Molesworth's *Account*', pp. 60–2.

¹³ Hammersley, *Republicanism*, pp. 94–6.

¹⁴ Robbins, *Commonwealthman*, p. 89.

¹⁵ See 'Abel Boyer's précis of the parliamentary debates on standing armies (1702–3)', in David Womersley, ed., *Writings on standing armies* (Carmel, IN, 2020), pp. 645–6.

¹⁶ Marie McMahon, 'Trenchard, John [pseud. Cato, Diogenes] (1668/9–1723)', *ODNB*.

¹⁷ Schwoerer, 'No standing armies!', pp. 175–6.

¹⁸ John Trenchard, *An argument, showing that a standing army is inconsistent with a free government, and absolutely destructive to the constitution of the English monarchy* (London, 1697), pp. 2–4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

of *The argument against a standing army rectified* deemed it ‘another pleasant fancy’ of Englishmen that there was ‘no slavery to be feared but in conjunction with Popery’ and cited the examples of both Denmark and Sweden to prove the point.²⁰

Ireland came into view in *An argument* when Trenchard stated that because England was an island nation, it would have time to raise an army if going to war, and that ‘no invasion could be so sudden upon us, but we shall have time to get ready our whole fleet, bring some forces from Scotland and Ireland, and prepare our own militia if there be occasion for it’.²¹ There was evident duplicity, or at best simple instrumentality, in such an argument, given that the army in Ireland was already in effect a permanent professional force. That Trenchard was so inclined in his argumentation was evident when he went on to herald the valour and feats of arms of non-professional soldiery: ‘we have seen as great performances done formerly...in the late war by the Vaudois in Savoy, the Miquelets in Catalonia, and the militia in Ireland, as can be paralleled in history’.²² Trenchard was clearly championing those in the predominantly Protestant north of Ireland who had taken up arms in late 1688 in support of the Williamite cause, most notably in Enniskillen and Derry, before regular professional troops were despatched from England. However, the stark reality had been that the reconquest of the rest of Ireland, where the majority of the population was Catholic and Jacobite, had required a very large professional army and nearly three more years of full-scale war.²³

The intended purpose of these Irish components of Trenchard’s pamphlet may have been to counter, or pre-empt, arguments that Catholic Ireland still represented a threat to the Glorious Revolution settlement. He may also have wished to allay very real doubts within England as to the militia being a sufficient, functioning military organization.²⁴ If so, his plan backfired. Instead, Ireland loomed larger and larger in the ensuing debate, with a particular focus upon two areas: the Irish Protestant militia and the associated matters of the martial ability of Irish Catholic soldiers and the threat of the Irish Jacobite forces in the service of Louis XIV; and the purpose of a standing army in Ireland.

III

The focus on Irish Catholic military ability and the threat from Jacobite forces in France arose primarily because of Trenchard’s introduction of the subject of

²⁰ *The argument against a standing army rectified, and the reflections and remarks upon it in several pamphlets, considered. In a letter to a friend* (London, 1697), pp. 24–5.

²¹ Trenchard, *Argument*, pp. 18–19. This wording was repeated verbatim by Boyer in his summary of the parliamentary debates. See ‘Boyer’s précis’, p. 645.

²² Trenchard, *Argument*, p. 21. This wording was reproduced by Boyer in his summary of the parliamentary debates. See ‘Boyer’s précis’, p. 646.

²³ For similar Irish Protestant valorization of Ulster Protestant resistance to James II, see James Kelly, ‘“The glorious and immortal memory”: commemoration and Protestant identity in Ireland 1660–1800’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 94 C (1994), pp. 37–43.

²⁴ See Schwoerer, ‘No standing armies!’, pp. 170, 182–3, 185–7.

a Protestant militia in Ulster in 1688–9. The anonymous author of *The case of a standing army fairly and impartially stated*, in supporting the case for a standing army, pointed out that the ‘Iniskilling [Enniskillen] men’ were not in fact a militia, but rather ‘people made desperate by the ruins of their estates and fortunes’, with ‘great numbers of them officers and private soldiers of the army, whom Tyrconnel had disbanded because Protestants...So that it is a mistake to say they were a militia.’²⁵

Most other writers, however, ignored such semantics. Daniel Defoe in *Some reflections on a pamphlet lately published* countered Trenchard’s original claim with the argument that

all their fame is owing to the despicable wretched conduct of the Irish; for what army but that of a rabble of Irish, could Inniskilling and London-Derry have stood out against, at the rate they did. So that these wonders of the militia are all phantasms, and not applicable to the present case at all.²⁶

In Defoe’s description, the phrase ‘the Irish’ was used to denote the Catholic supporters of James II, thereby reflecting the fact that by the 1690s the earlier differentiation between Gaelic Irish and Old English Catholics in Ireland no longer mattered for Englishmen.²⁷ For Defoe, they were now all just a Jacobite ‘rabble’, to be neither feared nor used as a measure for the usefulness or otherwise of a militia. This denigration of the ability of the Irish as soldiers was also beginning to replace earlier English fears of, and fearmongering about, the violent, savage and barbarous Irish. However, that fear had not been wholly eradicated. Cowardice and blood-thirsty violence often went hand-in-hand, and certainly did so in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England when it came to the derogatory characterization of Irish Catholics.²⁸

The two-page *A list of King James’s Irish and popish forces in France* looked to feed that residual fear. The pamphlet simply enumerated the 18,365 Jacobite soldiers in the service of Louis XIV in late 1697.²⁹ It was an easy option for the government’s supporters to raise the spectre of an Irish Jacobite army waiting to invade England, given that there were sufficient historical precedents relating to earlier Stuart attempts to use the army in Ireland for the same purpose.

There was, however, in these arguments an evident contradiction. If Irish Catholic soldiers were just a cowardly ‘rabble’, then why should those in

²⁵ *The case of a standing army fairly and impartially stated. In answer to the late history of standing armies in England* (London, 1698), pp. 13–14.

²⁶ Daniel Defoe, *Some reflections on a pamphlet lately published* (London, 1697), pp. 15–16.

²⁷ David Hayton, *The Anglo-Irish experience, 1680–1730: religion, identity and patriotism* (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 32–3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–9; Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: studies in the idea of Irish nationality, its development and literary expression prior to the nineteenth century* (Cork, 1996), pp. 32–76.

²⁹ *A list of King James’s Irish and popish forces in France, ready (when called for). In answer to an argument against a land-force, writ by A, B, C, D, E, F, G, or to whatever has been, or ever shall be, writ upon that subject* (London, 1697), p. 3.

French service be feared? It was a contradiction that also appeared in Walter Moyle's *The second part of an argument, shewing that a standing army is inconsistent with a free government*. In looking to demonstrate the usefulness of an English militia, Moyle turned to the recent war in Ireland and 'the advantage of fighting upon one's own dunghill'. Despite William III having more than 38,000 soldiers 'and a great part of the country in our possession, yet we were more than four [sic] years in conquering the rest, and almost a miracle we did it then'. His implication was that Irish Jacobites had put up fierce and, for a time, potentially successful resistance because they were fighting at home. On this premise, and his belief that 'our militia have more courage than Irishmen' and that there were ten men in England for every one man in Ireland, Moyle tried to convince his readers that any invasion of England would be readily rebuffed without a standing army.³⁰

Yet Moyle then seemed to contradict himself when he looked to address the potential threat from the Irish Jacobite soldiers in France. In a postscript, he claimed 'that though the Irish are the best troops in the world to plunder, murder, and massacre the innocent and defenceless people, yet they are the worst soldiers when they meet resistance'. By way of evidence, he referenced the 'late war in Ireland, particularly the siege of Londonderry, and the routing of Justin McCarthy [Viscount Mountcashell], one of the best officers, who was at the head of a considerable army, by a small number of the despised militia' at Newtownbutler in July 1689.³¹

Other anti-standing army writers avoided such contradictions by simply focusing on the trope of Irish Catholic cowardice. When Trenchard returned to the fray in late November 1698 with *A short history of standing armies in England*, published in the lead-up to another session of parliament as the standing army issue came to a head, he included a much more detailed focus upon Ireland, in part with a view to denigrating the professional soldiery and elevating the idea of a Protestant militia in their place. His purpose in so doing was to counter the government arguments 'that it was impossible to make a militia useful; [and] that the warlike King Jemmy had an army of eighteen thousand Irish heroes in France, who would be ready when called for'.³² To that end, Trenchard lauded the Irish Protestant 'militia of the country', which 'performed miracles' despite being 'almost without arms or clothes', and echoed Moyle in referencing 'that memorable siege of Londonderry' and victory at Newtownbutler. He then went on to suggest that the ensuing dismissal of this militia with 'scorn and ignominy' by the Williamite commander, Percy Kirke, ensured that 'the war in Ireland was nursed up either through chance, inadvertency, or the necessity of our affairs (for I am unwilling to think it was

³⁰ Walter Moyle, *The second part of an argument, shewing that a standing army is inconsistent with a free government* (London, 1697), p. 21.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 25–6.

³² John Trenchard, *A short history of standing armies in England* (London, 1698), p. 42. David Womersley provides a detailed consideration of the Irish references in this pamphlet in David Womersley, ed., *The Cambridge edition of the works of Jonathan Swift: Gulliver's travels* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 492–3.

design)' to the point where it required the despatch of a much larger army and the direct involvement of William III in 1690.³³

An even clearer focus on the trope of Irish Catholic cowardice was seen in the anonymous *Some queries for the better understanding of a list of King James's Irish and popish forces*. The argument was kept as brief as the original *List* with one page of queries that included 'Whether 18,000 Irishmen cannot conquer England, when 100,000 could not defend Ireland?'; 'Whether 150,000 English Militia do not want a Land-Force to defend them against 18,000 bogtrotters, headed by that mirror of valour, and epitome of all courage, K. Jemmy?'; and 'If five hundred Inniskilling men could beat ten thousand Dear-joys [at Newtownbutler], whether 900 when sent for, will not beat these 18,000 when called for?'³⁴

In a (*second*) *dialogue betwixt Jack and Will, about a standing army*, George Ridpath, a Scottish Presbyterian writer, also emphasized the proclivity of cowards to perpetrate violence against defenceless innocents. Playing on the word 'Standing' in an imagined conversation between a Jacobite and a Williamite, the character of Will asked 'how bravely [the Irish soldiers] stood to it at the Boyne and other places in Ireland?...If they made a stand anywhere, it was under Joan's petticoat.'³⁵ Having valorized Protestant resistance in Ulster in 1688–9, Will countered Jack's argument regarding the Irish Jacobite soldiers in France by stating that 'we are in no great hazard of being surprised without a standing force, especially now we know the number of your Teagues in readiness...upon my Shoul, my dear joy, I am not afraid'. Then, to Jack's riposte that James II would lead the '18,000 Irish and other Papists' to victory with aid from Jacobites in England, Will resorted to the stock claim that the Irish had certainly 'slain hundreds of thousands at once...but then it is only when they have met with defenceless people; for if they find any resistance...they'll be sure to fly for it'.³⁶

The polemical nature of all of these works was most evident in the usage of negative representations of Irish military practices, including massacre and cowardice.³⁷ It was also the case that the language used to caricature 'the Irish' – 'bogtrotters', 'Teagues', 'Shoul', 'Dear joys' – was nothing new in English stereotyping.³⁸

IV

The second Irish-related area focused upon in the debates of 1697–9 was the presence of a standing army in Ireland. The *Argument against a standing army*,

³³ Trenchard, *Short history*, p. 40.

³⁴ *Some queries for the better understanding of a list of King James's Irish and popish forces in France* (London, 1697), p. 3. Arising from the apparent proclivity of Irish people to exclaim 'dear joy', the phrase was used as a derogatory stereotype in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England. See, for example, Hayton, *Anglo-Irish*, pp. 8, 11.

³⁵ George Ridpath, *A (second) dialogue betwixt Jack and Will, about a standing army* (London, 1697), p. 2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

³⁷ See also the single sheet *Several reasons for the establishment of a standing army, and dissolving the militia* (London, 1700): 'Irish Papists...are certainly the best soldiers in the world, for they have slain men, women and children, by hundreds of thousands at once.'

³⁸ Leerssen, *Mere Irish*, pp. 90–103; Hayton, *Anglo-Irish*, pp. 11–12.

discussed, published in early 1698, seems to have been the first to raise the matter, when the anonymous author questioned whether Ireland 'has not...more cause to complain?...[but it] has not requested to be released: the Irish keep forces in their own country without murmuring; and we who have so precious a king's life to preserve, would hazard all that is dear to us, to save a little charges'.³⁹

The presence of a permanent army in Ireland was a challenge for the anti-standing army side. In order to argue for its disbandment, they needed to demonstrate that its continued existence for the ostensible purpose of keeping Ireland secure offered a greater threat to English rights and liberties than any potential Irish Catholic rebellion or foreign invasion. Trenchard therefore spent significant time in his *Short history* emphasizing the historic misuse of armies stationed in Ireland. While explicitly stating that William III, 'the most just prince living', would not use the army against the people, Trenchard argued that others around the king could not be trusted, and that the greatest danger would come under an unnamed tyrannical royal successor. To allow a standing army to become an accepted norm would certainly result in the loss of their rights and liberties in the future.⁴⁰ To that end, he argued that in fifteenth-century England 'the nation' would not 'suffer our kings to keep up an army in Ireland, though there were frequent rebellions there... well knowing they would be in England when called for. In the first three hundred years that the English had possession of that country there were no armies there but in times of war.'⁴¹ The key points for Trenchard were, first, that a standing army in Ireland was just a short sea journey away from being used to oppress English liberties; and second, that the potential for rebellion in Ireland, however real, was a lesser evil than the maintenance of a standing army there.

The perceived proclivities of the Stuart monarchs towards absolutism and crypto-Catholicism had made the existence of a standing army in Ireland even more threatening, especially when composed of Irish Catholics. Hence, Trenchard argued that since the reign of James I, the Stuarts had given great 'encouragement' to Irish Catholics for 'two purposes: one is, by this they have had a pretence to keep up standing armies there to awe the natives; and the other, that they might make use of the natives against their English subjects'.⁴² Charles I was accused of bringing 'many thousands' of Irish Catholics to England 'to fight against his people'. By way of evidence, it was pointed out that he had commissioned Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford, to raise an army of 8,000 Irish Catholic soldiers in order to enforce his will in England, a plan that had only been scuppered by the Scottish invasion.⁴³ Charles II was also attacked for having increased the army in Ireland to

³⁹ *The argument against a standing army, discussed. By a true lover of his country* (London, 1698), p. 18.

⁴⁰ Trenchard, *Short history*, pp. 57–8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19. For Defoe's rebuttal of this argument, see Daniel Defoe, *An argument showing, that a standing army, with consent of parliament, is not inconsistent with a free government* (London, 1698), pp. 20–1.

7,700 men, 'whereas they never exceeded in any former reign 2,000, when there was more occasion for them'. And, as with his predecessors, Charles II's army was 'to support the Irish, and the fear of the Irish was to support his army'.⁴⁴

For his part, James II was condemned for having actually brought Irish regiments over to England and for ordering English officers 'to take in so many Irish Papists' into their companies, 'by which they plainly saw he was reforming his army, and would cashier them all as fast as he could get Papists to supply their room'.⁴⁵ In this regard, Trenchard was conflating a number of occurrences during 1688, including the establishment of an Irish Catholic regiment in England under the command of Colonel Roger MacElligott and the drafting of Irish Catholics into the Portsmouth-based regiment of the king's natural son, James Fitzjames, duke of Berwick.⁴⁶

The importance of these events was also recognized by the Scottish writer, Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, in *A discourse of government with relation to militias*, which was the clearest attempt within the debate to locate anti-standing army arguments within a wider British context. Contextualized both with regard to Scotland's 'ancient limited and legal monarchy' and its more immediate economic imperatives as a separate kingdom, Fletcher advocated for a militia in both England and Scotland. He also argued that there should not be 'any Scots, English, or Irish regiments maintained in Ireland'. The danger of so doing was obvious: 'we all know with what expedition the Irish mercenary forces were brought to Britain to oppose his present Majesty in that glorious enterprise for our deliverance'.⁴⁷

But the issue of a standing army in Ireland was not just about what had occurred in the past. It was even more fundamentally about the very nature and purpose of the army stationed there in 1697–9. In this regard, Trenchard premised his arguments in the *Short history* by reiterating the idea that a sufficient army could be raised quickly enough if a genuine threat of an invasion ever materialized.⁴⁸ He then mocked the English government's 'profound expedient' of sending large numbers of soldiers to Ireland, 'as if our grievance was not the fear of being enslaved by them, but lest they should spend their money among us', and lamented that 'the nation is grown so contemptible in these gentlemen's opinions, as to think that they can remove our fears of a standing army, by sending them threescore miles off, from whence they may recall them upon a few days' notice'.⁴⁹

For Trenchard, 'an army kept in Ireland...is more dangerous to us than at home'. In England, soldiers could be kept in 'perpetual converse with their

⁴⁴ Trenchard, *Short history*, p. 32.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴⁶ J. G. Simms, *Jacobite Ireland, 1685–1691* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 45–7.

⁴⁷ Andrew Fletcher, *A discourse of government with relation to militias* (Edinburgh, 1698), pp. 35–6; Roberston, *Scottish Enlightenment*, pp. 22–6, 29–31. See also Pocock, *Machiavellian moment*, pp. 427–36; Walsh, 'Saxon republic', pp. 676–7. On the army in eighteenth-century Scotland, see Andrew Mackillop, 'Confrontation, negotiation and accommodation: garrisoning the burghs in post-Union Scotland', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 15 (2011), pp. 159–83.

⁴⁸ Trenchard, *Short history*, p. 42.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

relations and acquaintance' by which some of them 'may warp towards their country'. But in Ireland, the army was kept 'in a garrison, where they are shut up from the communication of their countrymen, and may be nursed up in another interest'. Such a perspective underlay the argument that permanent residential barracks were also the tools of tyrants.⁵⁰

Trenchard also looked to counter the earlier suggestion that the army had been sent to Ireland simply to reduce the financial burden on English taxpayers, by stating that it in fact made 'the matter so much the worse, for they are less likely to have any regard to their country'. The only solution was for the English parliament to disband the army in Ireland, as had been done in the reigns of both Charles I and Charles II, with such a course of action being presented as the only way to force the government to make the militia fully functional.⁵¹ Hence, the anti-standing army advocates also put forward various plans for reforming the militia, such as Fletcher's *Discourse of government* and John Toland's *The militia reform'd*.⁵²

As for the argument that Ireland willingly accepted the presence of a standing army, Trenchard looked to undermine it by raising the question of Ireland's subordinate constitutional status. The English parliament's long-standing claim of a right to legislate for Ireland without recourse to the Irish parliament had re-entered political discourse in the 1690s in light of increasing demands in England for legislative restrictions to be imposed upon the competitive Irish woollen industry. Although Westminster's prohibition on the export of Irish woollen manufactures was not enacted until April 1699, earlier endeavours to pass such a bill and the increasing public pressure for so doing made it seem inevitable. The Irish government's attempts to counter such an enactment were also well known, while the publication in early 1698 of *The case of Ireland's being bound by acts of parliament in England, stated*, authored by the Irish MP, William Molyneux, had hardened English country sentiment against claims that Ireland was a sister kingdom of equal rather than subordinate status.⁵³ Such Irish claims inferred an entitlement to the same rights and liberties as Englishmen, while rejection thereof equated to a denial of those rights and liberties, a perspective that would lead to much greater conflict in the American colonies in the 1760s and 1770s.

In relation to the ongoing woollen controversy, Trenchard suggested that the Irish parliament's acceptance of a standing army and its associated cost, 'without any other ceremony or qualification' as to the duration of that increased expenditure, was because 'they are not in a condition to dispute this matter; especially at a time when they apprehend hardships will be put upon them in relation to their trade'. He suggested that Irish MPs were willing to pay for the standing army in order to 'gratify the Court to the utmost of

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 47. See also Womersley, ed., *Gulliver's travels*, p. 492. On the building of a countrywide network of army barracks in Ireland from the 1690s onwards, see McGrath, *Ireland and empire*, pp. 67–106.

⁵¹ Trenchard, *Short history*, pp. 47–8, 61.

⁵² John Toland, *The militia reform'd* (London, 1698), pp. 67–9.

⁵³ P. H. Kelly, ed., *William Molyneux's the case of Ireland's being bound by acts of parliament in England, stated: a critical edition with introduction and notes* (Dublin, 2018), pp. 1–28.

their power, in hopes, if they can't prevent the passing of a law against them, to obtain a connivance' in its execution.⁵⁴ Trenchard clarified exactly what he meant in this regard when he mused:

how different the modish sentiments are in Ireland and England: For there the language is, We must comply with the Court in keeping up the army, or otherwise the Woollen Manufacture is gone; and here the men in fashion tell us, that an army must be kept up in Ireland to destroy the Woollen manufacture, and execute the laws we make against them; and in order to [do] it the people of Ireland are to pay them.⁵⁵

By highlighting two conflicting explanations for the presence of the standing army in Ireland, Trenchard had looked to undermine the validity of both. He had also looked to shift attention away from the more fundamental questions of rebellion or invasion.

But the perceived Irish Catholic threat could not so easily be left aside. One of the most direct responses to Trenchard's *Short history*, the anonymous *The case of a standing army fairly and impartially stated*, brought it centre stage once again, though with an even more extreme take on Ireland's constitutional status. In arguing why a standing army was needed in Ireland, the author simply stated that 'Ireland is our own country, and when we fought for that...we were reducing a people, who were in actual rebellion to the Crown of England.'⁵⁶ This was the practical argument: a standing army was needed to keep a potentially rebellious province, or colony, quiet.

Underlying these points were two continuing conundrums implicit in all of the arguments regarding the standing army in Ireland. The first was that the vast majority of the Irish population were disloyal Catholics. The second was Ireland's subordinate constitutional status, which Irish Protestants believed unfairly excluded them from the rights and liberties bestowed by the Gothic constitution.

V

Only one writer in 1697–9 proposed a way of resolving the conundrums of disloyal Irish Catholics and Irish constitutional subordination. The anonymous *The argument against a standing army rectified* proposed that political Union within the British Isles would reduce the need for a standing army. With reference to the kingdom of Ireland, the author argued that

[it] ought to be treated so as they may look upon themselves as fellow subjects, and that some stronger efforts should be made, and more

⁵⁴ Trenchard, *Short history*, p. 47. David Hayton has argued that there was some co-operation by opposition parliamentary groupings in both countries during 1698 on the standing army issue (D. W. Hayton, *Ruling Ireland, 1685–1742: politics, politicians and parties* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 70–1).

⁵⁵ Trenchard, *Short history*, p. 48; Womersley, ed., *Gulliver's travels*, p. 493.

⁵⁶ *Case of a standing army fairly and impartially stated*, pp. 10–11.

Christian methods taken to civilize and convert the popish natives than have hitherto been practised, and then we shall be in no danger of having our brethren throats cut by them in their country, nor of being invaded by them in our own...If Scotland and Ireland were both united to this kingdom, upon terms honourable and advantageous to us and them, we might...be secure against tyrants at home, and invasion from abroad, and England would be the unenvied head of the Union.⁵⁷

While still steeped in the stereotyping already evident in the standing army debates, the anonymous author was the only one who considered the idea of extending English rights and liberties to the kingdom of Ireland as a way of bringing an end to violence within the British Isles. The means of so doing was to be a political Union, which would allow for the Irish to be treated as 'fellow subjects', though this needed to be combined with greater efforts to 'civilize and convert' Catholics.

Conversion therefore was presented as a prerequisite to being treated as a loyal 'fellow subject'. Whether intentional or not, the author acknowledged that the religious allegiance of the vast majority of the Irish population meant that they were excluded from being participants in, and beneficiaries of, the aspired-to 'free state' or 'free monarchy'. This was a fundamental problem for Irish Protestant opponents of a standing army and was one that both Sir Francis Brewster and Henry Maxwell struggled to resolve even as they too looked to present the idea of a Union as the solution.

Brewster was a member of the Irish House of Commons throughout the 1690s who was best described as mercurial in his politics. He was a long-standing advocate of increased Protestant settlement in Ireland and looked to support such proposals in parliament, in his published writings, and on his own lands. During the Restoration, he established an ironworks and Protestant plantation on his Kerry estate and then re-established it in the 1690s after it had been destroyed during 1689–91.⁵⁸ He published, in 1695, on Anglo-Irish trade concerns including arguments for the settlement of Protestant refugees in Ireland, and then, in 1697–8, in defence of the Irish woollen industry. He was also well connected politically in England and, alongside Trenchard, was one of the seven commissioners appointed by the Westminster parliament in 1699 to inquire into the Irish forfeitures.⁵⁹

In 1702, Brewster returned to print with *New essays on trade*, essay VIII of which was entitled 'The advantage of a Union between England and Ireland'.⁶⁰ Such a Union, Brewster believed, would be to the economic benefit of both countries and would facilitate more English Protestants settling in Ireland if they were assured that they would not 'lose the birth-right of an

⁵⁷ *Argument against a standing army rectified*, p. 29.

⁵⁸ See D. W. Hayton, 'Plantation and politics in Williamite Ireland', *Studia Hibernica* (forthcoming).

⁵⁹ Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, pp. 47–8, 62, 68–9, 73–5, 95; idem, 'Plantation'; Kelly, ed., *Case of Ireland*, p. 15.

⁶⁰ Sir Francis Brewster, 'The advantage of a Union between England and Ireland', in idem, *New essays on trade* (London, 1702), pp. 66–79.

Englishman'.⁶¹ Such settlement would also increase England's hold on Ireland: 'It is easily understood what twenty thousand men inured to arms, for so every Protestant in Ireland is, may do, though they are not in a standing army.'⁶²

In an early rendering of the arguments of American colonists in the 1760s and 1770s, Brewster had thereby highlighted a fundamental issue for Irish Protestants. Perceiving themselves as both Irish and English at the same time, Protestants in Ireland believed they were entitled to the same rights and liberties as men born in England but that they were being denied them by the actions of the English government and parliament.⁶³ However, unlike the American colonists who would have the main threat to their lives and estates permanently removed by British victory over France in the Seven Years' War, Ireland remained an insecure polity in the 1690s and 1700s; hence, Brewster's argument for increasing the number of martially inclined Protestants. He did not explicitly mention a militia, but it was implicit in the argument that an increased Protestant population trained in arms would remove the need for a standing army.

The alternative was continued insecurity because of Irish Catholic 'alliance with the French'. For Brewster, a Union was even more essential since war had been renewed with France earlier that year, which in turn presented opportunities for 'the native Irish' to enter into rebellion in support of the Pretender.⁶⁴ Without a Union, there would have to be a permanent army in Ireland, 'which perhaps [now] needs a greater [one] than ever yet was'. But as others had warned in 1697–9, 'if any revolution should happen in England...the army in Ireland hath its side to choose, if they should think themselves under no obligation to England, but paid by Ireland, and not all Englishmen: it was found so by the parliament of Ireland, since the last war'.⁶⁵ This latter remark alluded to the fact that Irish Catholics continued to be recruited into the rank and file of the army in Ireland despite protests by the Irish parliament and in spite of government orders against the practice.⁶⁶

Brewster's argumentation was complex. The easy option for him, with an estate in a predominantly Catholic part of Ireland, would have been quietly to accept the presence of the army. Yet ultimately, he appeared to favour its disbanding and argued that this might be made possible by a Union that extended English rights and liberties to Ireland. Irish Catholics were not to be included, even by means of conversion. Instead, Brewster reverted to his long-held belief in increased Protestant plantation and settlement. His own experiences in Kerry and the continued challenges he faced there from Catholic outlaws may well have tempered his ability to take that additional leap of faith.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 74.

⁶² Ibid., p. 75.

⁶³ See Hayton, *Anglo-Irish*, pp. 25–48; Jim Smyth, "'No remedy more proper": Anglo-Irish unionism before 1707', in Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts, eds., *British consciousness and identity: the making of Britain, 1533–1707* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 307–8, 312, 320.

⁶⁴ Brewster, 'Union', pp. 76, 78.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 79.

⁶⁶ McGrath, *Ireland and empire*, pp. 113–15.

The other Irish writer to engage with the idea of a Union as a solution to the Irish conundrum was Maxwell, who was, along with Molesworth, a member of the Irish parliament's whig party. Maxwell had also probably associated with Molesworth and the other 'real' whigs who gathered at the Grecian Tavern in London in the 1690s. Certainly he was ideologically aligned with them. His main-stream whig credentials were first flagged with the publication in early 1702 of *Anguis in herba: or, the fatal consequences of a treaty with France*, which provided the standard whig argument about the need to prosecute war with France because Louis XIV could never be trusted.⁶⁷ The pamphlet was printed for Abigail Baldwin, widow of the trade publisher Richard Baldwin and a close associate of the printer-bookseller John Darby who was responsible for producing all of the principal texts of the post-Glorious Revolution whig canon, including the vast majority of the anti-standing army pieces published in 1697–9.⁶⁸

Maxwell's 'real' whig credentials were also evident within the work, most particularly when he argued that any treaty with France would require the maintenance of 'a very considerable standing army in time of peace' in order to deter French aggression against England's continental allies. The danger was that once people became accustomed to having such an army in peacetime, it was 'possible princes may always find out new pretences to keep them on foot'. If so, 'we may venture to say, that our liberty and constitution are at an end'.⁶⁹

Maxwell's assumption of the guise of an Englishman in *Anguis in herba* may have stemmed from a belief that his target English audience would thereby give greater credence to his arguments. Yet he may also have considered it the simplest way to avoid any distracting discussion of whether an Anglo-Irish Protestant such as he was similarly entitled to those rights and liberties of freeborn Englishmen. Presumably in light of the manner in which such claims had been so adversely received in England, in particular when made by Molyneux in 1698, Maxwell seemed to believe it was easier to make that argument in the guise of an Englishman, a belief that was even more evident when he next took to print in late 1703 with his anonymous *An essay upon an Union of Ireland with England*. The ongoing connection for Maxwell with the Grecian Tavern anti-standing army writers was evident in the fact that the first London edition of this pamphlet was printed for Timothy Goodwin, as had been the case for Molesworth's *Account*.⁷⁰

The *Essay upon an Union* opened with a 'real' whig attack upon the maintenance of a standing army in Ireland.⁷¹ On this occasion, Maxwell's anonymous

⁶⁷ Hayton, *Anglo-Irish*, pp. 105–12, 117–18.

⁶⁸ Henry Maxwell, *Anguis in herba: or, the fatal consequences of a treaty with France* (London, 1702), p. 1; Joseph Hone, 'John Darby and the whig canon', *Historical Journal*, 64 (2021), pp. 1257–80, at pp. 1259, 1275.

⁶⁹ Maxwell, *Anguis in herba*, pp. 63–4.

⁷⁰ [Henry Maxwell], *An essay upon an Union of Ireland with England* (London, 1703), p. 1; Champion, 'Introduction', in Molesworth, *Account*, p. xxviii.

⁷¹ For discussion of Maxwell's pamphlet, see Hayton, *Anglo-Irish*, pp. 118–22; Smyth, 'Unionism', p. 316; James Kelly, 'Public and political opinion in Ireland and the idea of Anglo-Irish Union, 1650–

Englishman maintained that ‘a free monarchy is absolutely incapable of governing its provinces or annexed states by force’. Therefore, he argued, ‘either England must suffer Ireland to live in liberty, or else they must maintain it in subjection by a constant force...contradictory to [England’s] own constitution, which is such an inequality as must some time destroy the liberty of England’.⁷²

For Maxwell, the maintenance of a standing army in Ireland was not, as some argued, a means of protecting the English constitution. It was instead a very real threat to that constitution, because ‘the king of England’s prerogative is greater there than here, and consequently he will find it easier to influence that...kingdom...to join with him in his unjust measures’. If there was no standing army in Ireland there would ‘be some hazard whether an ill king will be able to engage that nation in such designs, or not’. On the other hand, should England continue to control Ireland with a standing army, Irish dependence upon the monarch ‘will be so absolute and servile, that...they must blindly give into all the measures that their kings shall think fit to engage them in, however unjust or destructive of the liberties of England’. Nor did it ‘matter to say this army shall be English’. Echoing Trenchard and Fletcher in particular, Maxwell argued that 1641 and 1688 clearly demonstrated that ‘a standing army and arbitrary power never took root in Ireland, but the next step they took was to transplant themselves into England’.⁷³ Given his evident adherence to earlier ‘real’ whig arguments, it was therefore not surprising that he also advocated a militia of freemen: ‘an army whose real property is more valuable than their pay and hopes’.⁷⁴

However, the current policy in Ireland, Maxwell argued, would have one of two possible outcomes. The first was that it would force England to go the same way as the absolutist kingdoms of France, Spain, and Denmark – those previously ‘free monarchies that...have lost their liberty’ because they allowed for the creation of standing armies.⁷⁵ The second possible outcome was that England would once again be put to vast expense in lives and money in yet another reconquest of Ireland ‘whenever our future kings tyranny and oppression shall force us to it’. But reconquest was not a long-term solution either, given that ‘force and freedom being in their own nature inconsistent, can never agree together’; therefore by ‘preserving Ireland’ by force, ‘we make it their interest not to obey, and this is repugnant to our constitution’.⁷⁶

Ultimately, Maxwell’s purpose was the same as Brewster’s: to argue that a Union was a viable solution. After a Union, Maxwell suggested, a much smaller force would be needed for security purposes in Ireland. Apart from soldiers for manning a few garrisons, all that would be needed were some additional infantry and dragoons to ‘scour the bogs and mountains’ for outlaws. He likewise

1800’, in D. G. Boyce, Robert Eccleshall, and Vincent Geoghegan, eds., *Political discourse in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ireland* (Houndmills, 2001), pp. 116–17.

⁷² [Maxwell], *Union*, pp. 5–6. See also Smyth, ‘Unionism’, pp. 315–16; Kelly, ‘Political opinion’, pp. 116–17.

⁷³ [Maxwell], *Union*, pp. 7–8, 13.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

claimed that the enactment by the Irish parliament since 1695 of a series of penal laws that denied Irish Catholics access to weapons and military-grade horses and excluded them from all aspects of government meant that there could be no Irish Catholic counter-revolution of the type that had occurred under James II.⁷⁷ The fact that the Irish parliament felt the need to enact further penal laws in every session from 1704 to 1709, and intermittently thereafter through to 1750, would suggest, however, that Maxwell was perhaps being disingenuous about the extent to which the Catholic threat had been dealt with. His later involvement in actively supporting further penal laws would suggest as much, even though his levels of anxiety in that regard may not have been as high as that of other MPs; his estate was in County Down, a predominantly Protestant part of the country in which it was the perceived danger from Presbyterians that preoccupied members of the established church.⁷⁸

Alongside highlighting the penal laws, Maxwell also echoed Brewster by advocating increased Protestant plantation. Although Maxwell only included a rather generalized reference to the potential for further increasing the number of Protestants,⁷⁹ such ideas were also evident in his wider parliamentary career, as in 1703–4 when he took responsibility for a bill for the naturalization of foreign Protestants or in 1709 when he was involved in an address to thank Queen Anne for the settlement of Protestant Palatines in Ireland. His later publications also demonstrated his keen interest in increasing Protestant numbers in Ireland.⁸⁰

Maxwell's 'real' whig arguments against a standing army can get lost in the understandable focus by Irish historians upon the pro-Union stance of the pamphlet.⁸¹ David Hayton has suggested that Maxwell's 'comments about threats to liberty...might...have been tailored to his English readers' prejudices', in particular the English country opposition who had not only successfully disbanded most of William's army but had then gone on to assert English legislative authority over Ireland in the guises of the 1699 Woollen Prohibition Act and commission of inquiry into the Irish forfeitures and the 1700 Forfeiture Resumption Act. Hayton has also argued that the 'entire thrust of [Maxwell's] pamphlet is suspiciously close to the political strategy adopted in the 1703–4 session of the Irish parliament by the whig opposition'.⁸² The very real aim of that opposition was to secure annual sessions of parliament and greater freedom of legislative action in Ireland, a policy that can be hard to reconcile with calls for Union.⁸³

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14; Smyth, 'Unionism', p. 306. For the penal laws, see C. I. McGrath, 'The penal laws: origins, purpose, enforcement and impact', in Kevin Costello and Niamh Howlin, eds., *Law and religion in Ireland, 1700–1970* (Cham, 2021), pp. 13–48.

⁷⁸ Hayton, *Anglo-Irish*, pp. 104, 117.

⁷⁹ [Maxwell], *Union*, pp. 13–14; Smyth, 'Unionism', p. 306.

⁸⁰ Hayton, *Anglo-Irish*, pp. 106–9, 121–2.

⁸¹ Smyth, 'Unionism', p. 315.

⁸² Hayton, *Anglo-Irish*, pp. 119–20; *idem*, *Ruling Ireland*, pp. 71–80.

⁸³ C. I. McGrath, 'The "Union" representation of 1703 in the Irish House of Commons: a case of mistaken identity?', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 23 (2008), pp. 11–35; Smyth, 'Unionism', p. 308; Kelly, 'Political opinion', pp. 117–18.

Yet as Colin Kidd has pointed out, Irish Protestants also argued that there was an Irish Gothic inheritance derived from the twelfth-century Old English settlers in Ireland. On that basis, Irish Protestant ‘Gothicism’ could have both a ‘unionist pull’ while also allowing ‘the Anglo-Irish to protect themselves as one of medieval Europe’s Gothic kingdoms from excessive English ministerial interference in their constitutional arrangements’.⁸⁴

For Maxwell, raising the spectre of a standing army in Ireland thereby enabled him to advance arguments for Irish Protestants to be allowed ‘to live in liberty’ – or, in other words, for England to recognize that the rights and liberties of loyal Protestants in Ireland were inherently the same as those of freeborn Englishmen. By taking the guise of an Englishman and predicating his arguments for such recognition upon the danger that would otherwise arise for England’s own constitution and every freeborn Englishman’s rights and liberties, Maxwell also avoided suffering the same fate as Molyneux in 1698 when the latter was accused of seeking independence from England.⁸⁵ Such a perspective also helps to explain why Maxwell had commenced his pamphlet by ostensibly dismissing Molyneux’s *Case of Ireland*: ‘It is not the design of this discourse, to examine whether laws made in England ought to bind Ireland, it being sufficient for those of that nation to know, that this is a power which England claims, and is able to vindicate.’⁸⁶

Unlike those writing in 1697–9, neither Maxwell nor Brewster reverted to derogatory stereotyping of Irish Catholics. Yet both men, in different ways, believed that Irish Catholics were inherently disloyal and that the only solution was to increase the number of Protestants in the country. Neither man advocated the more radical proposal of intensifying the efforts at conversion so as to be able to extend those rights and liberties to the majority of the Irish population and thereby make the disloyal loyal. As two individuals who were fully embedded in Ireland and Irish society, their greater familiarity with Irish Catholics seemed to have tempered their views with regard to derogatory stereotyping but hardened their minds in sectarian terms.

VI

Throughout the 1697–9 standing army debates and in the ensuing writings of Maxwell and, to a lesser extent, Brewster, the influence of Molesworth, and his *Account*, can be gleaned. It was also the case that all three men, concurrently MPs in the Irish parliament, shared similar concerns, most notably in relation to a belief in the need for increased Protestant settlement in Ireland. In that regard, Molesworth had attempted to get a bill passed in 1697 to promote foreign Protestants coming to Ireland.⁸⁷ It was also the

⁸⁴ Colin Kidd, *British identities before nationalism: ethnicity and nationhood in the Atlantic world, 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 253, 256–7, 258–9.

⁸⁵ Kelly, ed., *Case of Ireland*, pp. 14–24.

⁸⁶ [Maxwell], *Union*, p. 3; Smyth, ‘Unionism’, pp. 315–18.

⁸⁷ Hayton, *Anglo-Irish*, pp. 106–7, 121.

case that both Brewster and Maxwell seem to have in turn influenced Molesworth's later thinking on the matter of standing armies, Ireland, and Union.

Commencing in 1705, Molesworth undertook the translation of Francis Hotman's 1574 *Francogallia: or, an account of the ancient free state of France*. As a treatise on the origins of Europe's Gothic constitution, Molesworth's purpose in so doing was to instruct 'the only possessors of true liberty in the world, what right they have to that liberty, of how great value it is, what misery follows the loss of it, and how easily, if care be taken in time, it may be preserved'. Molesworth's translation was first published in 1711 in the context of ongoing tory attempts to force an end to the War of the Spanish Succession and was printed by Timothy Goodwin, as had been the case for Molesworth's *Account* and the London edition of Maxwell's *Union* pamphlet. A second edition in 1721 included an extended 'Translator's preface', which formed the basis of a later text known as *The principles of a real whig*. This extended preface had probably been completed by Molesworth as early as 1707 though it had not been published with the first edition in 1711 because it was considered 'too incendiary for the times'.⁸⁸

In the 'Translator's preface', Molesworth argued for a Union of all three kingdoms on the grounds that 'No man can be a sincere lover of liberty, that is not for communicating that blessing to all people'. Essential to that endeavour was uniting the kingdoms 'on equal terms'. Believing that it was 'more desirable and secure to govern by love and common interest, than by force', Molesworth warned that to do the latter would lead 'in times of danger' to renewed attempts in Ireland to 'take that occasion to shake off an uneasy yoke'. And once again like Brewster and Maxwell, Molesworth ultimately argued that a Union would remove the 'need of entertaining a standing army against our brethren, as against our known and inveterate enemies'.⁸⁹

However, with regard to Irish Catholic disloyalty, Molesworth offered nothing new. Writing in more general terms, he saw Catholics as a danger because 'Popery sets up a foreign jurisdiction paramount to our laws', so that a 'real Papist' could not be 'a true subject', not least because they were 'the most priest-ridden creature[s] in the world'. Like Brewster and Maxwell, he also implied that the solution lay in increasing Protestant numbers through new settlements.⁹⁰

More generally, despite some equivocation regarding the usefulness of a standing army in peacetime as long as Jacobitism still threatened the return of tyranny and 'the raising of an army of quite different sentiments', Molesworth concluded that once liberty was secure 'no such thing as a mercenary soldier should subsist in England'. Likewise, he reiterated the 'real' whig position that the proper long-term solution was a militia made up of 'all the freeholders of England'.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Champion, 'Introduction', in Molesworth, *Account*, pp. xxx-xxxii.

⁸⁹ Robert Molesworth, 'The translator's preface', in *idem*, *Account*, pp. 181-2.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 177, 187.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 184-5.

It has been argued that Molesworth, unlike most of his contemporaries, was not sectarian – he was more anti-clerical than anti-Catholic. He was certainly opposed to popery, but likewise to any religion that exercised a ‘priestcraft’ that demanded absolute subservience and exerted secular control over the laity. Yet it was still the case that Molesworth’s fear of popery led him to support the Irish penal laws.⁹² His lack of engagement with anything other than increased Protestant plantation as a solution placed him in the same camp as more overtly sectarian writers and politicians at the time. Like Brewster and Maxwell, he avoided the derogatory stereotyping of Irish Catholics so prevalent in the English debates of 1697–9, yet also like his two compatriots, he seemed unable to think anew about how to make the disloyal loyal, even within the context of his proposed Union for ‘communicating that blessing’ of liberty ‘upon all the people’.⁹³

VII

For all those who engaged with anti-standing army ideology in the 1690s and early 1700s, Ireland was a problem. Irish Catholics were disloyal; Irish Protestants believed they were wrongly denied the rights and liberties of the Gothic constitution; and the country maintained a standing army. Irish identities and divided confessional allegiances, along with Ireland’s subordinated constitutional position, ultimately led Brewster, Maxwell and Molesworth to advocate for a Union. For all three, Union offered a means of trying to ensure that the rights and liberties bestowed by the Gothic constitution were enjoyed by Protestants in Ireland.⁹⁴ At the same time, however, as fore-fronted by the Irish Catholic stereotyping during the 1697–9 ‘paper war’, the majority of the Irish population was not to be comprehended within the rights and liberties bestowed by that Gothic constitution. Brewster, Maxwell, and Molesworth acknowledged that problem but, in reality, offered little by way of resolving it. Only the anonymous author of *The argument against a standing army rectified* in 1697 had suggested an alternative approach by arguing that a Union would best serve its purpose if combined with a meaningful policy for converting ‘the popish natives’.⁹⁵

Hence, it was the case that in the absence of any other acceptable solution to the question of Irish Catholic disloyalty, most Irish Protestants could not dismiss as readily as their English counterparts the arguments in 1697–9 regarding Irish soldiers in the service of France. Those soldiers were led by outlawed Irish Catholic landowners who had forfeited their estates in the 1690s as well as others descended from earlier generations of the dispossessed.

⁹² Hayton, ‘Molesworth’s Account’, pp. 60–2; Michael Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), p. 80.

⁹³ Molesworth, ‘Translator’s preface’, in *idem*, *Account*, p. 181.

⁹⁴ For contextualization of these various proposals for Union with regard to the negotiation of the Anglo-Scottish Union in 1707, see Smyth, ‘Unionism’; Kelly, ‘Political opinion’; D. W. Hayton, ‘Ideas of union in Anglo-Irish political discourse, 1692–1720: meaning and use’, in Boyce, Eccleshall, and Geoghegan, eds., *Political discourse*.

⁹⁵ *Argument against a standing army rectified*, p. 29.

Protestants living on those lands had much more to fear than their contemporaries in England. As for the Catholic gentry and nobility who remained in Ireland, most Irish Protestants did not trust them to participate in the defence of those rights and liberties, to perform their civic duty, or to offer service. So instead, the Irish parliament legislated to exclude them.

As such, an English debate about standing armies had served to highlight a much more fundamental problem regarding identity and confessional allegiance within the British Isles, wherein a large section of the wider population was excluded on sectarian and ethnic grounds from the rights and liberties advocated by 'real' whigs, among others. But the debate had also highlighted the degree to which ideas relating to the Gothic constitution were not just engaged with in England or Scotland. Irish Protestants also looked to utilize such ideology in arguing for their participation in those rights and liberties, proffering a Union as one possible means of achieving that outcome. Nor were these Irish arguments peripheral to the debate within the rest of the British Isles. The production of Maxwell's pamphlets in 1702 and 1703 by printers associated with the ongoing development of an English whig canon placed him more clearly within the Grecian Tavern's sphere of writers, including his better-known compatriot Molesworth. It also locates apparently Irish-centric considerations regarding standing armies, identity, and Union within a wider British 'real' whig milieu.

While Brewster's and Maxwell's Union pamphlets did not have significant afterlives, Maxwell's *Anguis in herba* was reprinted in 1707 and 1711, in the latter instance to counter Jonathan Swift's *The conduct of the allies* (London, 1711).⁹⁶ For their part, Molesworth's *Account* and 'Translator's preface' became core texts within the whig canon, being republished with regularity throughout the eighteenth century.⁹⁷

In the following decades, the Irish Protestant flirtation with Union waned as a patriot agenda centred on legislative independence gained greater traction. From the 1760s onwards, a more vocal opposition to standing armies that harked back to the debates of the 1690s and early 1700s also became evident in both the Irish parliament and the press as part of that patriot agenda, and demonstrated a continuity of thought within Irish Protestant political ideologies, including in relation to Ireland's Gothic inheritance.⁹⁸

At the same time, Irish Catholics looked to utilize such ideology in order to demonstrate Catholic loyalty and thereby try to resolve the question of sectarian and ethnic exclusion. As part of their campaign for repeal of the penal laws, the Catholic Committee looked to appropriate whig 'Gothicist' ideology for a re-imagined Gaelic Irish past in which 'the myth of ancient Milesian civilisation' was presented as of greater antiquity than the English Gothic inheritance. Ultimately, such arguments were aimed at proving that Irish Catholics

⁹⁶ Hayton, *Anglo-Irish*, p. 118.

⁹⁷ Champion, 'Introduction', in Molesworth, *Account*, pp. xxviii–xxxiv.

⁹⁸ Kidd, *British identities*, pp. 259–61; Stephen Small, *Political thought in Ireland, 1776–1798: republicanism, patriotism, and radicalism* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 36–47, 76, 83–4, 93–7.

could be trusted and that these ‘modern descendants of the ancient Milesians could surely be expected to conform to the mores of Hanoverian Britain’.⁹⁹

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⁹⁹ Kidd, *British identities*, pp. 159–62. See also Clare O’Halloran, *Golden ages and barbarous nations: antiquarian debate and cultural politics in Ireland, c. 1750–1800* (Cork, 2004), pp. 56–64, 144–53.

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