PROTESTANTISM, NATIONALISM, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY, 1660–1832

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ABSTRACT. *National identity, nationalism, patriotism, state formation, and their present-day policy implications now constitute one of the most vital areas of scholarship on British history. In no other period is the debate currently as focused as it is in the long eighteenth century, that crucially contested territory in which older assumptions about a fundamental transition between pre-modernity and modernity have now been called in doubt. This article offers an overview of recent work. It argues that much writing on these years has framed misleading models both of state formation and of national identity. It adds that this period is nevertheless a key one in revealing that the processes at work in sustaining collective identities in the British Isles did not originate with 'nationalism' in its historically correct meaning, and need not follow its trajectory.*

I

The very diversity and proliferation of recent scholarship in this field[1] suggests that we might sharpen discussion at the outset by setting out the most tenable understandings of the key terms that the historiography has reached. By 'state formation' is meant the process in which the geographical territory of a polity is created. This took different forms in different cases: some states (ancient Rome) expanding by the conquest and absorption of advanced neighbours; others (Australia) by settlement in areas thinly populated; others (the young American republic) by the expropriation of nomadic peoples. The polities of medieval and early modern Europe generally grew by dynastic accretion, often by the attachment (in different constitutional formulae) of smaller kingdoms, principalities, or fiefdoms to a core kingdom: this was the experience of England and her neighbours,[2] finally constituting a polity completed in 1801 before the age of ethnic nationalism.[3] These different scenarios in state formation have significance

[1] For surveys see Margot Finn, 'An elect nation? Nation, state and class in modern British history', *Journal of British Studies* 28 (1989), pp. 181–91; Gerald Newman, 'Nationalism revisited', ibid., 35 (1996), pp. 118–27. I am grateful to Jeremy Black, John Gillingham, Marjorie Morgan, and John Pocock for comments on drafts of this article. I owe a particular debt to Patrick Wormald, whose work first taught me to appreciate the significance of pre-Conquest history.

[2] Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and communities in Western Europe, 900–1300* (Oxford, 1984); R. R. Davies, ed., *The British Isles, 1100–1500: comparisons, contrasts and connections* (Edinburgh, 1989); idem, *Domination and conquest: the experience of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, 1100–1300* (Cambridge, 1990); Robin Frame, *The political development of the British Isles, 1100–1400* (Oxford, 1990); Mark Greengrass, ed., *Conquest and coalescence: the shaping of the state in early modern Europe* (London, 1991); Richard Bonney, *The European dynastic states, 1494–1660* (Oxford, 1991); J. H. Elliott, 'A Europe of composite monarchies', *Past and Present*, 137 (1992), pp. 48–71.

[3] Brian Levack, *The formation of the British state: England, Scotland and the Union, 1603–1707* (Oxford, 1987); Jenny Wormald, 'The creation of Britain: multiple kingdoms or core and

for concepts of 'national identity'. This term denotes the images of the polity in the minds of its members, and forms part of the individual's sense of personal identity also. It is one of the ties binding subjects or citizens to their political organization, and becomes a constituent of ideas of 'society' as distinguished from the state. The way in which visions of shared identity were formulated and adopted is the subject examined here. 'Nationalism' is a third key concept, formerly either a synonym for 'national identity' or signifying the particular form of it generated in the nineteenth century by the modern state, that is, by the populism, homogeneity, and vernacular unity of industrial society.[4]

If nationalism was thought only to be present in industrial society, the identification of an earlier origin seemed a gain in knowledge. The first stage in this recovery was to attend to pre-nineteenth-century states of collective awareness, to give them the distinguishing term 'patriotism', and to deny that this constituted a primitive form of nationalism.[5] Yet this model of just two possible forms of identity, patriotism and nationalism, was only a stage on the road towards a more historical picture. The methodologies evolved in the history of political thought in recent decades have shown that the categories of political science are not eternally applicable. It can now be appreciated that 'patriotism' and 'nationalism' are the proper names of two ideologies, historically located theories of the nature of national identity, two ways of explaining that identity and so mobilizing it for practical use.

'Nationalism' and 'patriotism' are both now located as terms coined in particular times and places to describe, and to shape, some of the changing forms which collective consciousness has taken over many centuries. 'Nationalism' was a nineteenth-century ideology that claimed as its rationale and as the intellectual matrix for collective identities the alleged constants of race, language, and culture; it ascribed a unity and

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colonies?', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 2 (1992), pp. 175–94. This argument is developed, with reference to state formation in the British Isles since 1536, in J. C. D. Clark, *The language of liberty, 1660–1832: political discourse and social dynamics in the Anglo-American world* (Cambridge, 1994). The nation state (a polity identical with what is generally accepted to be a single people) is not the only viable state form: the UK's survival since that time is evidence of the strength of an alternative model.

[4] 'Nations, we now know … are not, as Bagehot thought, "as old as history". The modern sense of the word is no older than the eighteenth century': E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 3. Gellner saw a role for religion in promoting nationalism only via Weber's thesis that Protestantism was the midwife of capitalism: Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism* (Oxford, 1983), p. 41. Such works at best propose analytical distinctions within 'nationalism' posited as a single teleological phenomenon. For an important reaction against 'a materialist conception of social reality' in historical sociology in favour of the view that 'Identity is perception', see Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: five roads to modernity* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), pp. 13, 496. This work nevertheless continues to use a single term, 'nationalism', to cover a variety of phenomena, contending that nationalism has 'a conceptually evasive, Protean nature' (p. 7). Historians see a series of different phenomena rather than a mysteriously united and Protean one.

[5] Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*, pp. 138–9, and Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism*, pp. 87–9, did so in order to disparage patriotism. This was not the object of Maurizio Viroli, *For love of country: an essay on patriotism and nationalism* (Oxford, 1995). This work rightly begins with an argument that patriotism and nationalism 'must be distinguished'; but although it seeks to historicize nationalism by finding for it a precise chronological genesis, it treats patriotism imprecisely as a language that 'has been used over the centuries' (p. 1).

a purposive, evolutionary force to these phenomena. As a doctrine devised in continental Europe, it carried the programmatic assertion that 'peoples' who shared language, culture (and ultimately race) would and should form polities which were homogeneous in these respects. Proponents of nationalism held their ideal to be the naturally arising means by which the individual might relate to his polity.

Yet this was a set of assumptions not found in earlier ages. The long currency of the term 'nation', itself carrying changing meanings, failed for many centuries to generate 'nationalism' in this sense.[6] Recent scholarship, reviewed here, establishes that peoples were well able to become aware of themselves as English or French, but the most effective intellectual matrix which contained their collective consciousness from the medieval period to the age of revolutions was a dynastic one whose chief components were law and religion.[7] In the form of national consciousness which Dickens's Mr Podsnap was meant to satirize, the two dominant components were libertarian constitutionalism and providentialism: it was their coincidence which gave them their peculiar force.[8] Powerful collective self-images did not have to wait for nineteenth-century ideas of ethnic unity.

'Patriotism'[9] was a far weaker ideology, but similarly specific: it was devised in England in the 1720s to give shape to a claim by the whig opposition to superior public virtue. In twentieth-century discourse the term was appropriated to denote a more decorous, libertarian, non-aggressive form of nationalism;[10] in the early eighteenth century, patriotism involved a militant Protestantism, a rejection of public corruption, and an aggressive international stance based on naval power.[11]

In so far as nationalism was assumed to be natural, spontaneously generated 'from below' out of popular culture, its history was severed from the much older history of state formation. As long as ethnic-linguistic nationalism was assumed as the secular norm, and assumed to be a dynamic phenomenon which overrode the claims of states

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[6] *The Oxford English dictionary* gave the first usage of 'nation' in 1300, 'national' in 1597; both were current long before its first example of 'nationalism', with a political meaning, in 1844. The same work traced 'patriot' to 1596, but found a source for 'patriotism' only in 1726. The third edition of the *OED* may uncover earlier usages for 'patriotism' but it seems unlikely that general currency will be discovered before the 1720s. [7] Clark, *Language of liberty*, pp. 46–140.

[8] Cf. Finn, 'An elect nation?', p. 181.

[9] The recovery of this phenomenon began with Bonamy Dobrée, 'The theme of patriotism in the poetry of the early eighteenth century', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 35 (1949), pp. 49–65; Betty Kemp, 'Patriotism, pledges and the people', in Martin Gilbert, ed., *A century of conflict* (London, 1966), pp. 37–46; Quentin Skinner, 'The principles and practice of opposition: the case of Bolingbroke versus Walpole', in Neil McKendrick, ed., *Historical perspectives* (London, 1974), pp. 93–128: 'By the concept of patriotism both Bolingbroke and his opponents understood the ideal of acting in such a way as to defend and preserve the political liberties which their fellow-countrymen enjoyed under, and owed, to the constitution', p. 99.

[10] This idea can be traced at least from Richard Price's *A discourse on the love of our country* (London, 1789); cf. Johan Huizinga, 'Patriotism and nationalism in European history' (1940), in Huizinga, *Men and ideas* (London, 1960), pp. 97–155. It is present in Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and belonging: journeys into the new nationalism* (New York, 1993), as 'civic nationalism', which 'maintains that the nation should be composed of all those – regardless of race, colour, creed, gender, language or ethnicity – who subscribe to the nation's political creed'. Ignatieff contrasts this 'rational attachment' with an unacceptable 'ethnic nationalism' (pp. 5–9).

[11] 'Patriotism' preceded Bolingbroke; the concept appears in the titles of polemical writings from 1731 at the latest. By contrast, the first title in the catalogue of the Bodleian Library to contain the word 'nationalism' is John Kingsley, *Irish nationalism* (London, 1887).

not premised on it, other possible matrices of collective identity were neglected. The assumption of the revolutionaries of 1848 was long widespread, that 'peoples' (Germans, Italians, Irish) naturally and legitimately seek incorporation into a state coterminous with their ethnic 'nation', and resist state forms imposed upon them from above which are not coterminous: 'the state', in this vision, became at best an imposition. Although this theory became self-validating in so far as it was widely believed, historians now point to the many other state forms before the nineteenth century which were supported on different rationales, which shaped different ideas of collective identity in their populations, and in which religion, not race, was often central. Recent historical attention to national identity has appropriately been accompanied by the reintegration of religious history into accounts of phenomena which had formerly been secularized. The specific implications of this reintegration are explored here.

II

This understanding of the key terms was not easily attained, and recent scholarship illustrates different stages on the road to this outcome. To speak of a 'road', indeed, implies too great an order and purposefulness in a variety of studies. 'The state' had long been unproblematic as a subject in Britain because of its maritime boundaries and the inability of Wales or Scotland to threaten encroachment on England: England's cartographical tradition was of Admiralty charts, not (like Germany's) of historical maps focused on disputed border regions. Patriotism was a taboo subject within much of British historiography after 1945; champions of the primacy of politics meanwhile assumed a secure national identity as the obvious corollary of that key functional unit, Thomas Cromwell's bureaucratic machine. If states had functional origins, it seemed, identities could be left to look after themselves.[12]

   As recently as the 1970s almost all varieties of historical opinion equally took the state for granted in their research strategies, and the problematic coherence of the dynastic state in the period of its apogee, 1660–1832, was obscured by assumptions of a timeless 'nationalism'. High-political historians took the overall framework of the state as fixed in order to refute progressivist political science by minutely documenting the play of contingency within the parliamentary arena. Students of popular politics similarly took that framework for granted, preferring to give substance to the categories of exploitation and oppression by showing how oligarchs captured and used the mechanisms of state power rather than studying how those mechanisms were put together. Social and economic historians took the state for granted: even the most politically engaged were concerned to record those emergent features of social life and action which would challenge the capitalist state and produce its withering away; they spent little time in exploring the powerful causes which had earlier generated structures of state power, or explaining the survival of the state in terms of the antiquity or strength of those structures. Because state formation was assumed, into the 1970s national identities were

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[12] This assumption was subsequently dispelled by Geoffrey Elton, *The English* (Oxford, 1992), which stressed Anglo-Saxon state formation and the importance of a religious matrix. On this book, see the discussion by Patrick Wormald, John Gillingham, and Colin Richmond, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 7 (1997), pp. 317–36.

neglected also, relegated to the same limbo as pre-war concepts like 'national character'.[13]

The return to the themes of state formation and national identity ante-dated the collapse of communist regimes and the reassertion of the nation state in Eastern Europe after 1989. In England, this revival was related most parochially to the frustration of plans for devolved government in Wales and Scotland, anticipated in the Kilbrandon Report of 1973 and sidestepped by clever political footwork at Westminster after Scots and Welsh referenda held in March 1979,[14] and secondly to academic incredulity and indignation at the displays of mass emotion evoked by the Falklands war of 1982. The symbolic frustration of anti-statist devolution and the triumphalist reassertion of a unified nationalism were frequently received by the English intelligentsia as affronts, calling for an academic response to explain away these unwelcome phenomena. Attention to state formation and identity thus sometimes carried the implied agenda of an attempt to dismantle both. Analytically, however, one can identify five main sources of scholarly innovation on this point, within which political purposes sometimes had a role.

The first source was political science and sociology, beginning in the 1970s.[15] Sociology had not ignored nationalism, of course; but where it had formerly traced its origins not earlier than Kant,[16] one distinguished student now ante-dated national consciousness and traced its origins over several millennia to ethnicity,[17] a subject still out of bounds to many historians. The mid-1980s saw a cluster of books, often from North America, produced by the further realization that sociology had ignored the state.[18]

[13] Still current with, for example, Ernest Barker, *National character and the factors in its formation* (London, 1928). Ch. 2, 'The genetic factor: race', continued the demolition of Victorian concepts of race even before the political events of the 1930s.

[14] H. M. Drucker and Gordon Brown, *The politics of nationalism and devolution* (London, 1980). This phase of academic analysis was not marked by postmodern hostility to national identities; Drucker and Brown indeed accepted as a premise (pp. 2–3) the Kilbrandon Commission's insistence on the reality of national identities in Scotland and Wales.

[15] Charles Tilly, ed., *The formation of national states in Western Europe* (Princeton, 1975), was a sociological work which lacked the comparisons between many different historical track records that its title seemed to promise. Geoffrey Elton, in his review, lamented: 'Three topics in particular ruin the investigation by their absence: the law, the Church and the ideology of nationalism... The only reason why [law] was left out would seem to be the authors' decision to treat states simply as engines of exploitation; bewildered by their concentration on the ''extraction of resources'' (mobilization of men and money), they entirely overlooked the fact that among the formative influences were other purposes quite as important to the inhabitants as to the rulers... Leaving out the Church would come naturally to this group of social scientists and historians anxious to be at home in the social sciences, but it tends to make nonsense of the whole enquiry': G. R. Elton, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart politics and government*, III (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 489–90. Tilly had not learned these lessons in *Coercion, capital and European states, AD 990–1990* (Oxford, 1990). For a critique of Tilly's neglect of political culture, political theory, and religion, see Siep Stuurman, 'A millennium of European state formation', *International Review of Social History*, 40 (1995), pp. 425–41.

[16] E.g. Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of nationalism* (London, 1971).

[17] Anthony D. Smith, *The ethnic revival* (Cambridge, 1981); idem, *The ethnic origins of nations* (Oxford, 1986). Smith argued (p. 1) against 'the new wave of social scientists and historians', naming Seton-Watson, Tilly, Breuilly, Nairn, Benedict Anderson, and Gellner, who 'pronounced the nation a wholly modern creation with few, if any, roots in earlier epochs'.

[18] John A. Armstrong, *Nations before nationalism* (Chapel Hill, 1982); Theda Skocpol, ed., *Bringing the state back in* (Cambridge, 1985); Michael Mann, *The sources of social power* (2 vols.,

The second source was provided less by writing on European history than by the political movement for European union. It was this which provoked J. G. A. Pocock's initial challenge, when a 'special relationship' with New Zealand was disrupted in the early 1970s by Britain's entry into 'Europe'.[19] The escalating project of integration stimulated both Euro-sceptic and Europhile surveys,[20] as well as an officially funded collective enterprise. Between 1989 and 1992, a group of scholars addressed a set of largely structural and functional themes sponsored by the European Science Foundation project on 'The origins of the modern state in Europe, 13–18th centuries', a project with a clear contemporary agenda.[21]

Thirdly, internal stresses within the British Isles had been parallelled by renewed academic attention (especially in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales) to what was defined as the 'British question', the assembly of the United Kingdom out of long-existing component parts or its attempted disassembly, and the cultural and political relations of those components. By contrast, not many historians in England accepted Pocock's challenge for some years after it was made. This theme found its main academic home at the Folger Library in Washington: there an influential series of seminars was held between 1984 and 1987, organized by John Pocock, Lois Schwoerer, Gordon Schochet and others. Although these seminars sailed under the flag of the history of political thought, their content came to be increasingly dominated by religion, national identity, and state formation. The proceedings, first published informally, now begin to appear in formal guise.[22] This initiative in the field of political theory, with Quentin Skinner's

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Cambridge, 1986); Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The great arch: English state formation and cultural revolution* (Oxford, 1986).

[19] J. G. A. Pocock, 'British history: a plea for a new subject', *New Zealand Historical Journal*, 8 (1974), reprinted in *Journal of Modern History*, 47 (1975), pp. 601–21, and 'The limits and divisions of British history: in search of the unknown subject', *American Historical Review*, 87 (1982), pp. 311–36.

[20] Jeremy Black, *Convergence or divergence? Britain and the continent* (London, 1994); cf. the Euroenthusiast Stephen Haseler, *The English tribe: identity, nation and Europe* (London, 1996). Haseler, a professor of government, there adopts the erroneous interpretation that 'A serious idea of Englishness…did not begin to cohere until the eighteenth century' (p. 11). The danger of uncritical borrowings by political science from flawed history is now urgent.

[21] Wim Blockmans and Jean-Philippe Genet, general eds., Richard Bonney, ed., *Economic systems and state finance* (Oxford, 1995); Wolfgang Reinhard, ed., *Power elites and state building (Thirteenth to Eighteenth centuries)* (Oxford, 1996); Janet Coleman, ed., *The individual in political theory and practice* (Oxford, 1996); Antonio Padoa-Schioppa, ed., *Legislation and justice: legal instruments of power* (Oxford, 1997); Peter Blickle, ed., *Resistance, representation and community* (Oxford, 1997); Allan Ellenius, ed., *Iconography, propaganda, and legitimation* (forthcoming); Philippe Contamine, ed., *War and competition between states* (forthcoming). Patrick Wormald, '*Enga Lond*: the making of an allegiance', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 7 (1994), pp. 1-24, at 19, questions whether Genet's structural priorities, finding the 'modern' state in the France of Philip the Fair (1285–1314), like another student of French history, J. R. Strayer, *On the medieval origins of the modern state* (Princeton, 1970), were not 'indulging the French historian's usual habit of confusing the history of France with that of Europe. Englishmen familiar with the vigour of English government on either side of the Norman conquest would be tempted to take their story at least three centuries further back.' The implications of this argument are explored below.

[22] J. G. A. Pocock, ed., *The varieties of British political thought, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, 1993); Roger A. Mason, ed., *Scots and Britons: Scottish political thought and the Union of 1603* (Cambridge, 1994); and John Robertson, ed., *A Union for empire: political thought and the Union of 1707* (Cambridge, 1995).

study of the early modern emergence of the concept of the state,[23] provides the most sophisticated account of the theoretical dimension of the question now available.

The most influential analogue in political history was the 'four nations' analysis of the British Isles, stressing the internal dynamics resulting from the United Kingdom's formation as a dynastic state.[24] A pioneering book in this genre had been written by an American,[25] drawing on American sensitivities to questions of colonialism. It was Britain's debates of the 1970s on devolution which placed this issue on the agenda for modern political commentators, most famously from a left-wing Scottish viewpoint;[26] from the late 1980s this model connected with the reinterpretation of the 'English' Civil War as a war between the three kingdoms, pioneered by Conrad Russell,[27] a vision which became widely influential within English academe.[28]

There was a fourth source. 'Nationalism', a European term, had long been inescapable as a leading theme of continental European historiographies. Yet historians of continental Europe had often denied that England experienced nationalism in the sense familiar to them, and historical works addressing the continental European dimension had little immediate impact within the historiography of Britain's long eighteenth century.[29] In this area it was the political left which re-opened the debate in

[23] Quentin Skinner, *The foundations of modern political thought* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1978); idem, 'The state', in Terence Ball, James Farr, and Russell L. Hanson, eds., *Political innovation and conceptual change* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 90–131.

[24] Richard S. Tompson, *The Atlantic archipelago: a political history of the British Isles* (Lewiston, 1986); Hugh Kearney, *The British Isles: a history of four nations* (Cambridge, 1989); J. C. D. Clark, 'English history's forgotten context: Scotland, Ireland, Wales', *Historical Journal*, 32 (1989), pp. 211–28.

[25] Michael Hechter, *Internal colonialism: the Celtic fringe in British national development, 1536–1966* (Berkeley, 1975).

[26] Tom Nairn, *The break-up of Britain: crisis and neo-nationalism* (London, 1977). For the astonishment of a Kenyan literary scholar studying in Scotland at this self-destructive historiography, used as he was to the more self-confident projection of metropolitan culture overseas, see Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: writing identity in the culture of colonialism* (New York, 1996), p. ix.

[27] Conrad Russell, *The causes of the English Civil War* (Oxford, 1990); idem, *The fall of the British monarchies, 1637–1642* (Oxford, 1991), were mature statements of an analysis worked out by Russell earlier, e.g. 'The British problem and the English Civil War', *History*, 72 (1987), pp. 395–415.

[28] It was given influential expression by the establishment at Cambridge in 1988 of a paper in the Historical Tripos on the 'British problem' from the Union with Wales in 1536 to the Union with Scotland in 1707, taught chiefly by a Civil War scholar, John Morrill, and an historian reasserting a 'nationalist' perspective in an Irish debate, Brendan Bradshaw. A record of the partly programmatic work inspired by this course is now published as Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill, eds., *The British problem, c. 1534–1707: state formation in the Atlantic archipelago* (London, 1996): it stressed, for example, that for nine centuries before 1922, Ireland was 'semi-detached' (p. 3). Addressing similar issues were Steven G. Ellis and Sarah Barber, *Conquest and union: fashioning a British state, 1485–1725* (London 1995), and Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer, eds., *Uniting the kingdom? The making of British history* (London, 1995), the latter justifiably summed up by J. G. A. Pocock (p. 292) as bringing to fruition the new approach to the subject for which he had called in articles published in 1974–5 and 1982 (above).

[29] 'English nationalism never existed, since there was no need for either a doctrine or an independence struggle': Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and states: an enquiry into the origins of nations and the politics of nationalism* (London, 1977), p. 34; John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the state* (Manchester, 1982; 2nd edn., 1993), pp. 5, 75–88; Michael Hurst, *States, countries, provinces* (Bourne End, 1986); Hagen Schulze, ed., *Nation-building in central Europe* (Leamington Spa, 1987); Peter Alter, *Nationalismus*, translated as *Nationalism* (London, 1989); Bernhard Giesen, *Nationale und kulturelle*

Britain.[30] A debate had existed within such circles, notably from Perry Anderson and Benedict Anderson,[31] without extending beyond that political milieu; the extension of this debate was due in large part to the growing interest in 'identity' created by postmodern methodologies. Beginning with the individual, the postmodern subject matter grew steadily more generalized: the identities of race, class, and gender were eventually extrapolated to end with national identities as a whole. Here, above all, were targets for authors who saw national identities as ones unthinkingly sustained by their political opponents and open to deconstruction.[32] 'Class' was, in reality, a token presence in this new trinity: to a large degree, historians of this persuasion turned to nationalism in response to the breakdown of a traditional class-based analysis.[33]

Fifthly, ecclesiastical history returned to a mode of consciousness which had been a key matrix of national identity.[34] Unexpectedly, this revealed that the concept of an English national church, and of a people with a destiny mapped out by Providence, both preceded the Reformation;[35] the implications of this work are explored below in section V. The theme of the role of religion in shaping national consciousness had never disappeared from writings on the Reformation,[36] but such surveys had long had little impact on other historians' ideas of English identity in a later period. Such insights were now felt even in French Revolutionary studies, hitherto most dominated by assertions of secularization: the link between religion and national identity in the continental European resistance to Napoleonic conflict began to be stressed from the mid-1980s. In Spain, but not only in Spain, a holy war against atheistic Jacobinism was combined with a movement of national emancipation and a religious revival. But a revival

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identität: studien zur entwicklung des kollektiven bewusstseins in der neuzeit (Frankfurt, 1991); Mary Fulbrook, *National histories and European history* (London, 1993); Mikulás Teich and Roy Porter, eds., *The national question in Europe in historical context* (Cambridge, 1993); Hagen Schulze, *States, nations and nationalisms: from the middle ages to the present* (Oxford, 1996).

[30] In England, the crucial works were Hugh Cunningham, 'The language of patriotism 1750–1914', *History Workshop*, 12 (1981), pp. 8–33, which adopted the insistence on patriotism as essentially constitutionalist and libertarian propounded by Skinner, 'The principles and practice of opposition' (1974); E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger, eds., *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge, 1983); and Raphael Samuel's edited collection of essays, *Patriotism: the making and unmaking of British national identity* (3 vols., London, 1989).

[31] Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the absolutist state* (London, 1974; 2nd edn., 1979); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London, revised edn., 1991).

[32] Notably, but not exclusively, in Roy Porter, ed., *Myths of the English* (Cambridge, 1992): 'The past thus seems to be up for grabs, a chest of props and togs ready-to-wear in almost any costume drama, available to fulfil all manner of fantasies' (p. 1).

[33] Finn, 'An elect nation?', p. 182. This process evidently preceded the break-up of multinational polities, especially in the former communist bloc after 1989. This last was a development generally welcomed by the left as an extension of pluralism, and less often deplored as an effect of populist nationalism.

[34] The papers of the nineteenth and twentieth meetings of the Ecclesiastical History Society were published in *Studies in Church History*, 18, as Stuart Mews, ed., *Religion and national identity* (Oxford, 1982); but despite highly relevant contributions, this research initially had little impact on some of the historians of the period 1660–1832.

[35] For its earliest dating, to the England of Bede, see Wormald, '*Enga Lond*'.

[36] E.g. Orest Ranum, ed., *National consciousness, history and political culture in early-modern Europe* (Baltimore, 1975), especially John Pocock's discussion of the 'elect nation' in England and Michael Cherniavsky's of the role of the Orthodox church in Russia.

presupposes something to be revived, and many of the details of military mobilization against invading French armies reveal the reassertion of existing local devotions, priestly leadership, the veneration of saints or relics, the invocation of an historic national role in fighting heresy and defending the motherland.[37]

It remained to be seen how these intellectual influences would affect the way in which national identity was explained in that paradigmatic case, England. There were to be two false starts, one exploring the theme of the 'fiscal-military state', the other exploiting the idea of 'the invention of tradition', but both contributed to an evolving understanding of the subject. Nevertheless, the significance of the years 1660–1832 was to be clear only when the period was seen within a much wider time-frame.

III

The idea that the formation and survival of states can be adequately explained in functional terms was now reasserted on the basis of research on taxation, linked with earlier work on war. The thesis of the importance of war in state formation had already been lucidly stated by Samuel Finer and Anthony Smith, and had substantial validity.[38] The English and British state after 1688, in the whig model of Macaulay and Trevelyan, was pictured as libertarian because loosely governed and lightly taxed. How, then, had such a state enjoyed such spectacular success in war, overseas expansion, and economic growth in the following century and a half? Work by Peter Dickson, Peter Mathias and Patrick O'Brien[39] showed that Britain had been, on the contrary, one of the most heavily taxed states in ancien regime Europe. 'Money is the sinews of war'[40] was a maxim better known to historians of colonial America and of the American Revolution, for the major traumatic episode of the eighteenth century in which the British polity was disassembled arose, ostensibly, from a dispute over the authority and ability of the metropolitan government to finance its military defence. This insight was made the basis of an analysis of Britain as a strong state by John Brewer in a work which focused on administrative structures and military logistics, and said little about national identities.[41]

[37] T. C. W. Blanning, 'The role of religion in European counter-revolution, 1789–1815', in Derek Beales and Geoffrey Best, eds., *History, society and the churches: essays in honour of Owen Chadwick* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 195–214. For a reassertion of the role of religious issues in the revolution itself, see Dale Van Kley, *The religious origins of the French Revolution: from Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560–1791* (New Haven, CT, 1996).

[38] Samuel E. Finer, 'State- and nation-building in Europe: the role of the military', in Tilly, ed., *Formation of national states in Western Europe*; Smith, *The ethnic origins of nations*, pp. 38–41, 73–6. To some degree, however, this may be a distorting effect on our perspective produced by the world wars of the twentieth century: see Kenneth O. Morgan, 'England, Britain and the audit of war', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 7 (1997), pp. 131–53.

[39] P. G. M. Dickson, *The financial revolution in England: a study in the development of public credit, 1688–1756* (London, 1967); Peter Mathias and Patrick O'Brien, 'Taxation in Great Britain and France, 1715–1810', *Journal of European Economic History*, 5 (1976), pp. 601–50; Patrick O'Brien, 'The political economy of British taxation, 1660–1815', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 41 (1988), pp. 1–32; idem, 'Public finance in the wars with France, 1793–1815', in H. T. Dickinson, ed., *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789–1815* (Basingstoke, 1990), pp. 165–87.

[40] Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *The fall of the first British empire: origins of the war of American independence* (Baltimore, 1982), p. 109.

[41] John Brewer, *The sinews of power: war, money and the English state, 1688–1783* (London, 1989). For this theme now see, more comprehensively, Bonney, ed., *Economic systems and state finance*, a

In 1990 Lawrence Stone chaired a seminar at Princeton on state formation, the proceedings of which were published in 1994. None of the contributions dealt directly with religion. Not many of them addressed national identity as a necessary precondition to or analogue of state formation. War, not national identity, religion, culture, or law was the key component of Stone's own explanations, and for Stone 'war is above all a matter of logistics', not of morale, belief, mission, ideology, or politics. Stone indeed dismissed these: the state 'has been described, cynically but accurately, by Eric Hobsbawm as ''a people who share a common misconception as to their origins, and a common antipathy towards their neighbours'''. It was held to follow that 'victory in war was a question of money, not men'.[42] Stone found explanations of victory by adapting the whig political scenario which had always gone with his social-structural scenario: 1688 created a strong state, but one whose bureaucratic machinery was 'uniquely decentralized' into the hands of the local gentry. This decentralization rather than a strong salaried bureaucracy, argued Stone, explained the paradox that Britain could be so highly taxed yet remained 'relatively liberal', the wielders of power having some regard for the rule of law, at least for property law. Stone contended that, after 1688, it was 'the parliamentary system, which had been a handicap to the Stuarts', that 'now became the critical element in creating Britain's fiscal capacity'. Brewer urged that it was the tax-collecting bureaucracy which was critical.[43] They were not that far apart.

These shared assumptions had the effect of restricting the themes on the agenda of national identity to the characteristics of what John Brewer had termed 'the military-fiscal state': taxation levels, debt, the tax-collecting bureaucracy.[44] First came the state, assumed Stone, then came nationalism: 'British nationalism certainly developed in the period 1790–1810, but the credit must go mainly to the fears engendered by, first, the radical ideas of the French revolutionaries and then, the ambitions of Napoleon for world hegemony.'[45] Nationalism was evidently a late consequence, not an early cause, of national success. Indeed, much writing elsewhere about eighteenth-century riots, impressment, smuggling, coining, and the unpopularity of public criminal punishments left the consistent impression that the state was strongly unpopular, a regime to be understood in functional terms rather than in terms of consensual acceptance, ideological hegemony, or shared national identity.[46] Although Brewer contended that

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survey which spans the period from the middle ages to the end of the eighteenth century, covering the themes of taxation, fiscal institutions, the church, sovereignty, currency, economic theory, the financial relations of centre and periphery, rebellions against taxation, the financing of war, and national debts. For a consideration of this argument in a later time frame, see Philip Harling and Peter Mandler, 'From ''fiscal-military'' state to laissez-faire state, 1760–1850', *Journal of British Studies*, 32 (1993), pp. 44–70.

[42] Lawrence Stone, ed., *An imperial state at war: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London, 1994), pp. 2, 4, 6. Hobsbawm's dismissal of the perceptions of ordinary men and women is characteristic of one school of thought. The legitimacy of this approach as history is open to doubt.

[43] Ibid., pp. 2, 5, 20.

[44] For a more developed functional analysis by an author represented in Stone's volume, see Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: building states and regimes in medieval and early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997). Ertman places states in a typology determined by two polarities: absolutist v. constitutionalist, and patrimonial v. bureaucratic.

[45] Stone, ed., *Imperial state at war*, p. 11.

[46] 'Too little attention has been paid to the fact that Britain in the eighteenth century was little more than a somewhat precarious and recently formed federal political unit. A viable state is not

the British state was more like its continental counterparts than had been thought, and although Stone replied that 'In many important ways, the British state remained different',[47] they both argued their case on a functional level, largely omitting national consciousness, and wholly omitting political ideology, law, and religion.

The Stone–Brewer vision was of the imperial and military formation of 'the state', an abstract concept and one which did not clearly distinguish England from Britain or the United Kingdom. At that early stage of the subject this part of the picture was made to do duty for the whole. The thesis was also proleptic, too secure about the outcome; yet this confidence rested on a circular argument. Britain could raise the taxation to win its wars because it was sufficiently libertarian. How do we know it was sufficiently libertarian? Because it raised enough taxation to win the wars. It might be objected that in the long eighteenth century there was no such security, either about national wealth or military victory. Each war, each rebellion, hung in the balance. The most crucial episode of state formation of all, the American Revolution, never featured in Stone's or Brewer's scenario, yet that episode is central in revealing the nature of the ideological processes involved.[48] Scholarship outside the long eighteenth century had already revealed that the longer-term scenario of state formation in the British Isles, as on most of the European continent, was essentially dynastic (and therefore ideologically, not merely functionally, expressed) and that it was essentially concerned with England's relations with Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. This at once illuminated both that process and its constraints. It replaced on the historical agenda the theoretical underpinnings of the state in ideology and law; and it highlighted the salient role of religion. All these called for integration into a functional model.

IV

Functional models of state formation found an alternative from 1987 in research which arrived at a familiar end point from unfamiliar materials. A pioneering work in the study of national consciousness argued on the evidence of cultural history for a reformulation of early Hanoverian English identities in reaction against French cultural hegemony, a 'philosophical transformation' of 'mere patriotism' into nationalism 'essentially between the mid-1740s and the mid-1780s'.[49] This essay in the analysis of discourse was nevertheless overshadowed by another influential work which depicted nationalism as false consciousness by drawing on ideas of the 'invention of tradition'. Linda Colley's *Britons*[50] had two main explanatory theses, in the areas of war and

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necessarily coincidental with a nation, the latter being defined by a sense of community in a common culture and patriotic feeling shared by both rulers and ruled': ibid., p. 4. This assumption of the weakness of the eighteenth-century dynastic state depended on an implied comparison with an ideal type, the nineteenth-century ethnically grounded nation state. The inappropriateness of the latter as a general yardstick is one theme of the present article.   [47] Ibid., p. 17.

[48] Clark, *Language of liberty*.

[49] Gerald Newman, *The rise of English nationalism: a cultural history, 1740–1830* (London, 1987), pp. 53, 63, 67. Newman denied the applicability of 'nationalism' to the England of the seventeenth century, but treated the mid-eighteenth-century phenomenon as continuous with nineteenth-century 'nationalism'. He also argued for 'nationalism' as an essentially secular idea, an offshoot of the Enlightenment.

[50] Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT, 1992).

religion, and one main argument about chronology. The first thesis (echoing Lawrence Stone's seminar of 1990) was that 'War played a vital part in the invention of a British nation after 1707.' The second thesis concerned religion: 'It was their common investment in Protestantism that first allowed the English, the Welsh and the Scots to become fused together, and to remain so, despite their many cultural divergences.'[51] The book's chronological scenario was that Britishness was invented after 1707, fundamentally recast after 1815, and open to easy reinvention in the present. These three elements will be examined in turn.

First, war. The main research for *Britons* was on the militia during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars: what were the reactions of the rank and file to military service? Who was unwilling to serve, and why? What effect did the geographical mobility of regular and militia units have on people's sense of their identity? The author extrapolated this research, pointing to the series of wars with France, begun in 1689, ending only in 1815, each larger than the former, and argued for their novel importance in defining English identity antithetically against a foreign enemy. Yet this argument was inconclusive, for if wars are formative influences on collective self-awareness it seems likely that an English national identity was forged much earlier, and may have established itself before the shared 'British' identity allegedly created by military co-operation after 1707. We shall see that this was indeed so (section V below).

It is not clear what, if anything, the addition of the term 'the Other' added to this argument, yet this was the term continually invoked. This antithesis meant that the complex *impact* of war was explained in only one way, in terms of 'Britons' defining themselves against 'an obviously hostile Other'. More influences of war on society might be expected,[52] and the tensions and lasting disunities created by wars must be weighed against the unities they (perhaps temporarily) demanded. Colley's argument that 'men and women decide who they are by reference to who and what they are not'[53] shifted attention to situations, especially fiscal-military situations, and away from thought and belief. Yet unless people already had a fairly good idea of their own substantive characteristics, it is unclear why they would perceive the Other as the Other at all.[54]

Britons also treated wars in this period as having one main sort of *outcome*: uniting Britons, and especially the English, Scots, and Welsh elite, against the outsider. There were, nevertheless, countervailing forces, for wars in the long eighteenth century often opened up internal tensions as much as they resolved them. Whig wars against France under William III and Anne stoked Tory–Jacobite resentment, and France frequently

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[51] Ibid., pp. 367–8.

[52] For more sophisticated analyses of the impact of war in shaping societies, often distorting or reversing processes of social evolution or state formation deemed to be linear, see for example Bartholomew H. Sparrow, *From the outside in: World War II and the American state* (Princeton, 1996); Arnold D. Harvey, *Collision of empires: Britain in three world wars, 1793–1945* (London, 1992); Clive Emsley, *British society and the French wars, 1793–1815* (London, 1979).

[53] Colley, *Britons*, pp. 5–6.

[54] It seems likely that this concept was borrowed from another discipline and used without a clear sense of its limitations. This echoing of a concept was doubtless encouraged by the literary scholar Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* (New York, 1978), where the Orient was presented as providing Europe's 'deepest and most recurring images of the Other' (p. 1). Here as elsewhere, it took time for a fashionable term to percolate into the historiography.

played on the possibility of an invasion to restore the Pretender. One consequence of such a restoration after 1689 would have been a redefinition (or disaggregation) of the constitutional relations of England with Scotland, Ireland, and Wales: this possibility was present as late as the abortive French invasion attempt of 1759.[55] Although the Seven Years War was a triumph for Britain within Europe, American historians have revealed how it sowed the seeds of disunion in the Thirteen Colonies.[56] The War of American Independence was a British civil war, profoundly dividing opinion on both sides of the Atlantic[57] and almost leading to the loss of Ireland. Equally, a French invasion attempt in 1797 and an Irish rebellion in 1798 mark points at which Britain's war with revolutionary France almost ended in defeat and dismemberment.[58] Without these major episodes, any account of state formation would exclude the essential counter-factuals.

The second explanatory thesis of the book concerned religion as a matrix of identity. *Britons* rightly attached importance to this theme, which had already been reintroduced elsewhere in scholarship on the long eighteenth century. Yet *Britons* enlisted Protestantism chiefly as a way of strengthening its simple antithesis in which 'Protestant Britain' confronted 'Catholic France'.[59] There is most truth in this explanation between the Glorious Revolution and the end of the Seven Years War, but it is not an exclusive truth: before 1688 the obvious enemy was another 'Protestant' power, the United Provinces, as it was during the American War of 1776–83. Imperial expansion also contributed to break up any simple denominational perceptions of 'the Other'.[60] As we now realize, the correlation in England during these years was strong between the 'friends of America' and theologically heterodox Dissent, but weak between pro-Americans and Protestant Dissent as a whole. Britain had Roman Catholic allies at many points in the eighteenth century, including Portugal; France itself from 1716 to 1731; and Austria during the War of the League of Augsburg, the War of the Spanish Succession, and the wars against France after 1793. Alliances with Orthodox Russia caused equally little difficulty.

By contrast, the accession of a Calvinist monarch as William III in 1689 and a Lutheran one as George I in 1714 created major difficulties, despite their unchallenged

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[55] Claude Nordmann, 'Choiseul and the last Jacobite attempt of 1759', in Eveline Cruickshanks, ed., *Ideology and conspiracy: aspects of Jacobitism, 1689–1759* (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 201–17.

[56] Jack P. Greene, 'The Seven Years' War and the American Revolution: the causal relationship reconsidered', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 8 (1980), pp. 85–105.

[57] For this thesis see especially Clark, *Language of liberty*, pp. 296–381.

[58] Marianne Elliott, *Partners in revolution: the United Irishmen and France* (New Haven CT, 1982); idem, *Wolfe Tone: prophet of Irish independence* (New Haven, CT, 1989).

[59] For the much more complex role of religion see, for example, Tony Claydon and Ian McBride, eds., *Protestantism and national identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650–c. 1850* (Cambridge, 1998).

[60] 'It has recently been argued that empire was an instrument of national consolidation, unifying the British against the French, the nation's primary "other". Yet the discourses of imperialism produced as many contradictions as unities, championing libertarianism and chauvinism, celebrating the birthrights of white English men while denying those rights to Britons, and vindicating the libertarian reading of English constitutional development while also embedding hierarchies of difference in English political culture. The 'others' identified or subdued through the imperial project were internal as well as external, domestic as well as foreign, within as well as without': Kathleen Wilson, *The sense of the people: politics, culture and imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 24–5.

Protestantism.[61] After 1763 it mattered less and less that France was Catholic, and after 1789 anti-French sentiment flourished after the Roman Catholic church in France was shattered. Throughout the early and mid-eighteenth century, 'a virulent anti-Catholicism was compatible with the entire spectrum of political positions in England'.[62] A simple dualism of Protestant versus Catholic will not do as an explanation of a putative consensual national identity.[63] A more informed approach to religious phenomena would show that, especially from the forging of a new whig ideology in the 1670s, the enemy was less Roman Catholicism as such than 'popery', a heady cocktail of power, luxury, uniformity, universal monarchy, and pride which could be diagnosed in a number of enemies: some Englishmen saw it in the United Provinces in the 1660s,[64] some colonial Americans saw it in George III's rule in the 1760s.

Because the object of the concept of 'Protestantism' in *Britons* was chiefly to establish an antithesis between 'Britons' and 'the Other', the book offered little on the nature of that religion which was one of its key themes. Despite brief acknowledgement of Protestant Dissent[65] it treated 'Protestantism' without further discussion as essentially one thing, where the reality was much more complex. This relative disregard of the content and continuities of religion also contributed to one of the book's less persuasive assumptions. The author wrote repeatedly of 'the invention of Britishness', of Great Britain as 'an invented nation', 'this essentially invented nation', 'an invention forged above all by war'.[66] Such an approach built on the message of an influential text:[67] an implication that nationalism is false consciousness, the irrational result of what *Britons* termed 'a vast superstructure of prejudice'.[68] Such a formulation does not reveal what true consciousness might be; but since everything is at some moment done, thought, or felt for the first time, it can never be more than a truism. The trope of false consciousness is particularly unhelpful when it implies a high degree of credulousness on the part of the people and of deceit on the part of undefined elites, as when scenarios of national development embodied in ecclesiastical history are dismissed as 'pious lies…what [people] were told in church'.[69] With the idea of false consciousness went assumptions about real motivation: 'an active commitment to nation was often intimately bound up with an element of self-interest…From patriotism, men and women were able to anticipate profits of some kind.'[70]

An inattention to denominational and sectional differences went with a neglect of the differences between British and English. The book's subject was British national identity, Britishness defined as the unitary identity to which some appealed in order to ratify the Union of England and Wales with Scotland in 1707 and to replace Englishness and Scottishness. But the novelty of 'Britishness' is not evidence that national identity as such was new, that it was false consciousness, or that it was weakly grounded. It can be shown, as we shall see, that Englishness, though continually evolving, was very ancient. A stress on the novelty and impact of the Union of 1707 was insufficient to demonstrate that the inhabitants of the British Isles did come to see themselves as a

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[61] For the divisions of identity created by the Hanoverian accession, see Wilson, *Sense of the people*, pp. 101–17.   [62] Ibid., p. 368.

[63] Even that most militantly anti-Catholic part of the British empire, the Thirteen Colonies, found it possible without substantial controversy to accept France as an ally in 1778.

[64] Steven C. A. Pincus, *Protestantism and patriotism: ideologies and the making of English foreign policy, 1650–1668* (Cambridge, 1996).   [65] Colley, *Britons*, p. 18.   [66] Ibid., pp. 1, 5, 369.

[67] Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds., *Invention of tradition*.   [68] Colley, *Britons*, p. 36.

[69] Ibid., p. 20.   [70] Ibid., p. 55.

single people or were often urged to do so.[71] Before the nineteenth century, they probably shared an identity less unanimously than did the citizens of the USA after 1776 or of France after 1789. A few unified national ideas and symbols were devised and adopted, but they never erased sectional consciousness; lasting differences often threatened the dissolution of the state which had been so laboriously built up. It had already been established that Wales and Scotland possessed separate identities from England's into the nineteenth century, albeit fragmented ones: the end point of *Britons*, a unified identity, was in doubt even before the book was published.[72] A model of national consciousness is required that gives proper attention to the considerable degree to which 'British' identity was consistent with ancient sectional identities rather than replacing them with the whig vision of 1707. Such a model would account for the way in which travellers from the British Isles in continental Europe, even into the nineteenth century, normally used 'British' of political or commercial matters to describe the component parts of the United Kingdom acting together, almost never to imply a shared 'British' national identity, except occasionally to indicate something praise-worthy about the 'British character' in war.[73]

If 'nationalism' was born in 1707, how did it relate to the ancien régime? *Britons* suggested that it did so chiefly as a solvent; that the 'plebeian patriotism' enlisted to defend Britain against the French Revolution had such democratic overtones that it undermined as much as defended the old order, with results evident after 1815: patriotism, or nationalism, was presented as 'radical'.[74] Yet much of the evidence advanced to support this argument can be paralleled in earlier periods. Doubts about the reliability of the militia forces were equally entertained in the 1640s and in 1688. The elite after 1660 feared putting arms into the hands of potential Levellers, and the extent of Jacobite disaffection after 1688 made impossible the organization of a national militia until the Act of 1757.[75] The fact that significant numbers of men would not fight in a particular war, or fight at the behest of a particular ministry or monarch, did not mean that they were lacking in awareness of or identification with their national identity. On the contrary, it might mean that they were so highly conscious of that identity as to possess cogent reasons for thinking that the government of the day was betraying it. As research had earlier shown, during the Napoleonic wars it was chiefly Dissent, especially 'rational Dissent', that most resisted official efforts to promote military service, and not surprisingly: 'at this time religion usually set the terms of the debate about loyalty'.[76] It was Anglicanism, especially when influenced by evan-

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[71] For ambiguities over 'Scots' and 'British' identities even into the nineteenth century, see Marjorie Morgan, 'The terminology of national identity in Victorian Britain', paper presented to a conference of the North American Conference on British Studies, 5–8 Oct. 1995.

[72] Keith Robbins, *Nineteenth-century Britain: integration and diversity* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 1–28.

[73] Morgan, 'Terminology of national identity', discusses other usages in addition to these.

[74] For a new interpretation of this theme see J. C. D. Clark, 'Religion and the origins of radicalism in nineteenth century Britain', in Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein, eds., *English radicalism, 1550–1850* (forthcoming).

[75] Ian F. W. Beckett, *The amateur military tradition, 1558–1945* (Manchester, 1991); J. R. Western, *The English militia in the eighteenth century: the story of a political issue, 1660–1802* (London, 1965).

[76] William Stafford, 'Religion and the doctrine of nationalism in England at the time of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars', *Studies in Church History*, 18 (1982), pp. 381–95, at 381; for the complex relationship of militia service to 'patriotism', see J. E. Cookson, 'The English volunteer movement of the French wars, 1793–1815: some contexts', *Historical Journal*, 32 (1989), pp. 867–91. For challenges to and defences of the asserted providentialism of church and nation in

gelicalism, that was most resolutely statist, and it has long been known that a similar linkage can be observed at the same period in Germany.[77]

The third element in *Britons* was its chronological scenario. A special significance was claimed for the period 1707–1837. The author argued that 'it was during this period that a sense of British national identity was forged'; it saw 'the invention of Britishness'.[78] If valid explanations of major developments are being offered, those explanations will indeed place the phenomena chronologically with greater precision than before. Yet this argument was unsupported in two major ways. It rested on a lack of comparison even with other eighteenth-century examples: instances of deliberate attempts to frame a national identity in the USA after 1783 and in France after 1789[79] show that any analogous efforts in Britain to devise national symbols, to integrate provincial and regional consciousnesses in a new Britishness, were relatively few and fragmented. One can find a small number of unlikely bedfellows, from Daniel Defoe[80] to Lord Bute, who consciously tried to promote such a united identity, but their aspirations were of secondary importance by comparison with repeated attempts to devise and project images of religious denominations and of the dynasty, attempts which were already very ancient. Second, the argument for the special importance of the period 1707–1837 was unsupported by any comparison with what had occurred in previous centuries, yet it was just such a comparison that it now became possible to make.

Britons indeed had an underlying purpose which looked forward rather than back: 'Britain is bound now to be under immense pressure', threatened by loss of empire, by the decline of Protestantism, by European federalism.[81] The inspiration of much writing at that time was indeed Tom Nairn's 1970s text *The break-up of Britain*, a work disclosing a secular, left-wing Scot's lack of historical understanding of the substance of Englishness, and Benedict Anderson's work, chiming with that of Hobsbawm and Ranger on the invention of tradition, and claiming the malleable, impermanent, and indeed terminal nature of national identity.[82] Linda Colley volunteered the importance of her Welsh background,[83] and a similar concern to promote devolution or dissolution may have been at work here, too. A nation 'invented' as she described it could easily be de-invented, once the external stimuli were removed. This was the book's present

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the 1830s, see Sheridan Gilley, 'Nationality and liberty, Protestant and Catholic: Robert Southey's Book of the Church', *Studies in Church History*, 18 (1982), pp. 409–32.

[77] Koppel S. Pinson, *Pietism as a factor in the rise of German nationalism* (New York, 1934).

[78] The Conclusion quoted with approval a remark by the journalist Peter Scott: 'Britain is an invented nation, not so much older than the United States': Colley, *Britons*, pp. 1, 373.

[79] Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution* (Paris, 1976; trans. Alan Sheridan, Cambridge, MA, 1988); Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: the modernization of rural France, 1870–1914* (London, 1977); Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne into battle: republican imagery and symbolism in France, 1789–1880* (Paris, 1979; trans. Janet Lloyd, Cambridge, 1981); Lynn Hunt, *Politics, culture and class in the French Revolution* (Los Angeles, 1984).

[80] Katherine R. Penovich, 'From "Revolution principles" to Union: Daniel Defoe's intervention in the Scottish debate', in Robertson, ed., *A Union for empire*, pp. 228–42, shows that Defoe, like Bede, sought to express the Union and British identity in terms of providential mission.

[81] Colley, *Britons*, p. 6. For this political programme adopted as an historical framework, see John Kendle, *Federal Britain: a history* (London, 1997).

[82] Anderson, *Imagined communities*; Nairn and Anderson are acknowledged in *Britons*, pp. 386, 413. As with the work of Clifford Geertz, it may be that these belated borrowings from social anthropology have not been made with sufficient discretion.   [83] Colley, *Britons*, pp. 9, 16.

purpose: 'if Britishness survives (and it may not)', *Britons* expressed the *hope* that it would take a different form.[84] Its main omission was all the more puzzling: without investigation, the book treated 'patriotism' and 'nationalism' as synonyms and ignored their analytical relationship to 'Britishness'.[85]

V

The false starts discussed in the two previous sections both embodied some valid general principles: state formation, war, and taxation were interrelated, and national identities did evolve over time. Yet both were much older than nineteenth-century nationalism or the Union of 1707. The related processes of state building, and the interaction of religion and law in the conceptualization of a national identity, can be traced back beyond the personal Union of crowns with Scotland in 1603 and the Union with Wales in 1536.[86] There are grounds for ante-dating the strong state earlier still, and a major displacement in our perspective on these questions has been compelled by the work of medievalists. Anglo-Saxon governments have been shown to have operated the most effective financial system in Europe between the Romans and c. 1387, and a state form able to avoid civil conflict by bringing the earls under central jurisdiction. Much evidence points to a wide extent of 'emotional and ideological commitment' to this state.[87] Anglo-Saxon law and religion now emerge as the origins of English perceptions of group identity at later periods too.[88] As Elton argued, the united kingdom of England can be dated to the political union of 927, a dynastic arrangement which henceforth embodied what Wormald had identified as 'a remarkably precocious sense of common "Englishness"' defined, for the literate, by the ecclesiastical historian Bede.[89]

Merely structural considerations, even including military ones, were themselves insufficient explanations of this achievement. This could be shown by a functional comparison of the English kingdom of Edward the Confessor and the German polity of the Emperor Henry IV, the two most powerful monarchies of late eleventh-century Europe. Both polities were challenged by localist revolts of nobles; but whereas the

[84] Ibid., p. 9. Haseler states the same political agenda more candidly: "Englishness" was the identity of a small caste which ran the "tribe" and, more importantly, the state…the end of the UK, and the demise of this uniform identity, provides a chance to express finally the diversity of the peoples of the British Isles. This book is dedicated to a rediscovery of that diversity': *The English tribe*, p. viii. An equally historically flawed component of this analysis is its treatment of the UK as an attempted 'nation state' whose claim to identity with a nation is compromised by internal diversities (p. 7). The unhistorical programme to *promote* the demise of these things was most cogently expressed in Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism*, esp. pp. 182–3.

[85] Colley, *Britons*, esp. pp. 5, 8, 370–2   [86] Clark, *Language of liberty*, pp. 46–51, 62–71.

[87] James Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxons* (Oxford, 1982); idem, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon history* (London, 1986); idem, 'The united kingdom of England: the Anglo-Saxon achievement', in Grant and Skinner, eds., *Uniting the kingdom?* (1995), pp. 31–47, at 35; idem, 'The late Anglo-Saxon state: a maximum view', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 87 (1994), pp. 39–65.

[88] Patrick Wormald, 'Bede, the *Bretwaldas* and the Origins of the *Gens Anglorum*' in Patrick Wormald, Donald Bulloch, and Roger Collins, eds., *Ideal and reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon society: studies presented to J. M. Wallace-Hadrill* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 99–129; idem, 'The Venerable Bede and the "Church of the English"', in Geoffrey Rowell, ed., *The English religious tradition and the genius of Anglicanism* (Wantage, 1992), pp. 13–32; idem, 'Frederic William Maitland and the earliest English law', *Law and History Review*, 16 (1998), pp. 1–25; idem, *The making of English law: King Alfred to the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1999).

[89] Elton, *The English*, pp. 1–2, citing Wormald, 'Bede, the *Bretwaldas*'.

revolt of 1073 'sounded the knell of effective kingship in much of medieval Germany',[90] the northern rising of 1065 did not destroy the integrity of the English monarchy, any more than did a whole series of northern risings in subsequent centuries. England remained a relatively unified, centralized polity; others in Europe did not. Why were so many polities of Western Europe, existing in recognizably modern shape about AD 1000, broken up and reconstituted only much later? Why did England, remarkably, retain much the same shape to the present? England's 'governmental apparatus' was 'bafflingly elementary', argued Wormald[91] (we might add that it continued to be so through the eighteenth century, by comparison with many continental states, however much we have recently learned about the customs and excise or the militia). The answer must lay elsewhere, and one sociologist was independently moving in the same direction in his work on the question of ethnic survival:

how and why some *ethnie* were able to perpetuate their cultures, albeit with changes, over centuries, even millennia, while others, some of them politically much stronger, dissolved and fell into near-oblivion. Here it is suggested that, among the complex of relevant factors, religious conditions of salvation and their texts, liturgies and clergies, were vital elements in the retention of ethnic forms among many communities.[92]

The structural explanations which might explain England's exceptionalism were insufficient, argued Wormald, since 'each was more or less available to hegemonies elsewhere in Europe that did not survive'.[93] A Roman inheritance of political unity was not effective in Britain, but certainly found in *Italia*, *Hispania* and *Gallia*. Britannia, after the Roman withdrawal, collapsed politically; even the Saxon invaders achieved no greater unity than the Heptarchy, with no inherent trend to unification. The inclusive English kingdom of Aethelstan (927) had many functional similarities with its Carolingian prototype, including oath-bound allegiance to the sovereign as a political guarantee and as the defining element in a legal jurisdiction which safeguarded property; none of this eliminated powerful localist pressures. Even the Conquest in 1066 is not enough as an explanation of English unity thereafter. How was the new French-speaking ruling elite

persuaded to accept a style of government which was in effect that of the kingdom acquired north of the Channel, and definitely not that of the kingdom left behind south of it?…Why indeed did they so soon come to think of themselves as English? The Norman Conquest cannot have been the *making*, even if it was the saving, of England. England, as its name implies, was made already.[94]

Another scholar has also traced 'an increasing sophistication in the development of a self-conscious 'perception of "English" cultural uniqueness and individuality towards the end of the ninth century'.[95]

What, then, created the difference? One clue was that England had another characteristic from at the latest the twelfth century: a sense of mission to bring civilization to its neighbours.[96] If England consolidated itself and expanded at this early

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[90] Wormald, '*Enga Lond*', p. 2, correcting Strayer, *On the medieval origins of the modern state*.

[91] Wormald, '*Enga Lond*', p. 3.

[92] Smith, *The ethnic origins of nations*, p. 4 and ch. 5 passim.

[93] Wormald, '*Enga Lond*', p. 3.   [94] Ibid., pp. 9–10.

[95] Sarah Foot, 'The making of *Angelcynn*: English identity before the Norman Conquest', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 6 (1996), pp. 25–49.

[96] John Gillingham, 'The beginnings of English imperialism', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 5 (1992), pp. 392–409.

period with only elementary bureaucratic mechanisms, its distinguishing feature was a formative ideology, and from a yet earlier date. 'England' and 'English' were terms denoting a 'well established ethnicity' even before the early tenth century. What was its source? The most successful polities of early medieval Europe were those that responded to the depiction of a common enemy: this was articulated partly by writing a people's history, partly by depicting it as a people chosen by God, a warrior people with a mission, specially chosen by the God of battles. The inclusive identity of Angles, English, was established by Pope Gregory's mission: 'a single English kingdom was anticipated by a single English church'.[97] Ecclesiastical authority was then 'reinforced by a supreme masterpiece of the world's historical literature', Bede's *An ecclesiastical history of the English people*. Bede was a Biblical scholar, and his underlying theme in his *History* was 'God's dealings with his original Chosen People'.[98] Bede interpreted the traumatic history of his island since the Roman withdrawal in terms of divine pleasure or displeasure, reward or punishment. Englishness became providential.

In Bede's vision, the 'gens Anglorum' became 'a people of the Covenant', with a powerful image of their past and their destiny. The dynasty of Alfred exploited it; Bede's *History* was widely circulated in Latin and in English translation; Alfred's lawbook in turn 'took the Old Testament model further than Charlemagne'. 'Old Testament logic was that the cause of political disaster was sin and crime. To obey God's law was a *sine qua non* of lasting worldly success.' Anglo-Saxon experience, whether of the Northumbrians, Mercians, Kentishmen, or West Saxons, was that 'Bede's implied warning had almost come to pass when another pagan people crossed the North Sea and threatened to remove their own hard-won promised land as the punishment of their backslidings.' By the early eleventh century, the English kingdom could look back on a time of trials overcome. After the Conquest, this vision of English unity and purpose was absorbed by the spokesmen of the new regime, like William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum anglorum* and Orderic Vitalis's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis normannorum*.[99] Bede meanwhile achieved wider and wider circulation. By the 1130s, another edifice was built on this foundation, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum britanniae*.[100] Nor was a national identity an attribute of medieval England alone: Scotland, Ireland, and Wales all displayed a variously defined sense of their integrity, widely shared among their populations, which made their relations with England a key dynamic of state formation in the British Isles.[101] English expansion, however fitful, was informed by this sense of Englishness from at least the mid-twelfth century;[102] England was a special case in a

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[97] Wormald, '*Enga Lond*', pp. 10–11, 13.   [98] Ibid., p. 14.   [99] Ibid., pp. 15, 17.

[100] John Gillingham, 'The context and purposes of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 13 (1990), pp. 99–118, for an interpretation of that work as a contribution to 'the politics of cultural nationalism'.

[101] The present paper does not concern itself directly with the forms of 'national' identity to be found in Wales, Scotland, and Ireland from the middle ages to the present. On this theme, see especially Frame, *Political development of the British Isles, 1100–1400*; Davies, *Domination and conquest*; Murray G. H. Pittock, *Inventing and resisting Britain: cultural identities in Britain and Ireland, 1685–1789* (London, 1997); Alexander Murdoch, *British history, 1660–1832: national identity and local culture* (London, 1998); Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts, eds., *British consciousness and identity: the making of Britain, 1533–1707* (Cambridge, 1998); Murray G. H. Pittock, *Celtic identities* (Manchester, forthcoming). In general, such research has emphasized the degree to which England's neighbours did not subsume their identities in a new British identity after 1707.

[102] John Gillingham, 'The beginnings of English imperialism', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 5 (1992), pp. 392–409.

Europe-wide process of the expansion of core kingdoms over Slavonic, Celtic, or Iberian peripheries.[103] These were processes which, in England's case, offset and finally extinguished the fluid, trans-national allegiances of the medieval period.

The theme of the impact of war on collective consciousness is important to medievalists, and beside the divisive effects of conflict, powerful until 1485, must be set unifying influences. Service in the nationally organized Anglo-Saxon militia must have had such an effect, and the way in which the concept of 'the community of the realm' was reinforced by military service can be traced from the reign of Edward I (1272–1307); this obligation was enforced by persuasion or propaganda in which the interests of the people and the kingdom were openly equated, a 'common obligation to defend the realm'[104] which appealed over the heads of the barons, bound as they were by more clearly defined and more limited feudal obligations. One scholar has pointed to the twelfth century as the era in which the Irish (and also the Scots and Welsh) were redefined by English chroniclers as alien, barbarous, and hostile: 'One of the consequences of this was the emergence of a sense of Englishness based upon what were perceived as significant differences between English and Celtic societies',[105] a sense which long predated Protestantism. Another scholar had stressed the Englishness of this phase of expansion, and argued that what happened in the British Isles in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was 'the second tidal wave of Anglo-Saxon or English colonization',[106] despite lasting conflicts over control of the Anglo-Norman empire.

War demonstrably contributed to national feeling during the Hundred Years' War with the French: this acted to focus an English identity, though one clearly different from that which came later.[107] For the sixteenth century, Elton similarly stressed the importance of English self-definition against 'another body of people, habitually hostile [the Scots], opposing whom meant identifying more consciously with your own kind on a national scale'.[108] The emotionally charged wars with Spain of that century were expressed in terms of a religious antithesis[109] and gave rise to a 'Black Legend' sharply

[103] Robert Bartlett, *The making of Europe: conquest, colonization and cultural change, 950–1350* (London, 1993).

[104] Barnaby C. Keeney, 'Military service and the development of nationalism in England, 1272–1327', *Speculum*, 22 (1947), pp. 534–49, at 543.

[105] John Gillingham emphasizes the importance in this respect of Henry II's partial conquest of Ireland in 1170–1: 'English invasion of Ireland', p. 24.

[106] Davies, *Domination and conquest*, pp. 12, 14, 114–15 and passim. The theme is extended in Davies's Presidential Address, 'The peoples of Britain and Ireland, 1100–1400', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 4 (1994), pp. 1–20; 5 (1995), pp. 1–20; 6 (1996), pp. 1–24; 7 (1997), pp. 1–24.

[107] Georges Grosjean, *Le sentiment national dans la guerre de cent ans* (Paris, 1927); Halvdan Koht, 'The dawn of nationalism in Europe', *American Historical Review*, 52 (1947), pp. 265–80; Ernst H. Kantorowicz, '*Pro patria mori* in medieval political thought', *American Historical Review*, 56 (1951), pp. 472–92; John Barnie, *War in medieval society: social values and the Hundred Years War, 1337–1399* (London, 1974); A. K. McHardy, 'Liturgy and propaganda in the diocese of Lincoln during the Hundred Years War', *Studies in Church History*, 18 (1982), pp. 215–27; John Gillingham, 'The English invasion of Ireland', in Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield, and Willy Maley, eds., *Representing Ireland: literature and the origins of conflict, 1534–1660* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 24–42; idem, 'Conquering the barbarians: war and chivalry in twelfth-century Britain', *Haskins Society Journal*, 4 (1992), pp. 67–84; idem, 'Foundations of a disunited kingdom', in Grant and Stringer, eds., *Uniting the kingdom?*, pp. 48–64.

[108] 'English national self-consciousness', in Elton, *Studies*, IV, p. 132.

[109] For studies of national consciousness in the sixteenth century, see Richard Helgerson, *Forms of nationhood: the Elizabethan writing of England* (Chicago, 1992); Claire McEachern, *The poetics of*

contrasting Spanish and English character types.[110] Yet war was not necessarily a causeless cause: national identity preceded external war in the seventeenth century and was not chiefly dependent on it.[111] Nor was war against an external 'Other' necessarily paramount: in the 1640s, 'Civil war was a forcing house of national identity.'[112] The three Dutch wars of the seventeenth century had their own distinct impact, and related to the dynamics of denomination and identity in yet another way. Nor did this side-effect of war end in 1815. Ecclesiastical historians of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain have shown that the interplay of war and religion continued in new settings;[113] the two world wars of the twentieth century and the major social changes which followed warn against a claim that any earlier war forged a lasting sense of identity. The First World War was the prelude to the break-up of a shared, empire-wide sense of Britishness,[114] and the Second to a redefinition of British ethnic identity also.

The progressive rejection of a nineteenth-century model of nationalism has revealed ways in which national feeling can arise even despite linguistic diversity, a diversity which existed before 1066 and survived to the fourteenth century. Law provides one such example. It has long been known that 'The earliest and most ardent statements of the theory of *de jure* as well as *de facto* independence of kingdoms came from canonists and theologians largely of England, Spain and France, from the late twelfth to the mid-thirteenth century and later.'[115] The Englishness of the English common law can be dated at least to 1210, when King John took with him to Ireland a charter to ensure that 'English laws and customs' would be observed there.[116] Similarly, literary scholars, addressing thought and belief rather than structural questions, have long been aware of a national consciousness in medieval England. Older work tended to treat it as a fifteenth-century innovation;[117] this insight has been progressively extended back to the

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English nationhood, 1590–1612 (Cambridge, 1996); John M. Richardson, 'The barbarians: humanism and nationalism in early Tudor England' (M.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1993).

[110] William S. Maltby, *The black legend in England: the development of anti-Spanish sentiment, 1558–1660* (Durham, NC, 1971).

[111] Peter Furtado, 'National pride in seventeenth-century England', in Samuel, ed., *Patriotism*, I, pp. 44–56, emphasizes the themes of 'national honour and national sin', p. 54.

[112] Fletcher, 'The first century of English Protestantism', p. 316; Fletcher, *The outbreak of the English Civil War* (London, 1981), pp. 191–207.

[113] John Wolffe, ed., *Christianity and national consciousness* (Leicester, 1987); idem, *God and greater Britain: religion and national life in Britain and Ireland, 1843–1945* (London, 1994); Alan Wilkinson, *The Church of England and the First World War* (London, 1978); idem, *Dissent or conform: war, peace and the English churches, 1900–1945* (London, 1986); W. J. Sheils, ed., *The church and war* (Oxford, 1983).

[114] Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, eds., *Englishness: politics and culture, 1880–1920* (London, 1986), focused on similar pressures for redefinition within England.

[115] Gaines Post, 'Two notes on nationalism in the middle ages', *Traditio*, 9 (1953), pp. 281–320, at 320.

[116] Paul Brand, 'Ireland and the early literature of the common law', *Irish Jurist* (1981), reprinted in Brand, *The making of the common law* (London, 1992), pp. 445–63, at 446; cf. Davies, *Domination and conquest*, pp. 114–15.

[117] V. H. Galbraith, 'Nationality and language in medieval England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser., 23 (1941), pp. 113–28, acknowledged that 'There can of course be no doubt about the existence of some sort of a national consciousness in pre-Conquest England' (p. 118), but emphasized the ardent national consciousness of fifteenth-century chroniclers writing in English in the face of military challenge. H. J. Chaytor, *From script to print: an introduction to medieval literature* (Cambridge, 1945), ch. 3, 'Language and nationality', traced the beginning of 'a national

mid-thirteenth. Authors using Latin and French then also 'expressed their sense of England as a nation'. That the concept of the nation coincided with the whole people was an idea disseminated, deepened, and consolidated by writers in English in the fifty years before the outbreak of the Hundred Years' War in 1337, defining a nation in terms of its territory, its people, and its language. No longer can it be maintained that 'national consciousness was held in check by a dominant supra-national organization, the Church', since 'multiple and overlapping identities co-exist without cancelling one another out' and since 'it was in the interests of the clergy to promote a sense of national identity as a way of claiming common interest with their lay audience'.[118]

A providential framework for those identities long preceded the Reformation: the parallel between England and Israel, in order to illuminate God's design for the first as well as the second, was introduced as a truism in the chancellor's opening speech to the parliament of 1376–7.[119] Where Norman kings of England were initially cautious about claiming sovereignty over Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, their archbishops like Lanfranc and Anselm did claim that the jurisdiction of Canterbury extended over all the British Isles.[120] It was not a consequence of Protestantism, then, that 'an ideologically engendered allegiance is…the key to the antiquity and resilience of the English state'.[121]

The ancient identity of the *Ecclesia Anglicana* meant that the Reformation did not at once create a unitary national identity. As a religious message of universal validity, Protestantism initially implied a reaction against the national subdivision of the universal church;[122] only subsequently were some sections of 'Protestantism' identified with national churches and so with national identities. One strand of the Reformation stressed a pan-European solidarity between believers in the Reformed traditions, a shared sense of a supra-national destiny.[123] Since the English had 'a long-standing reputation for xenophobia' even by 1500, it did not help that Protestant theology was originally associated with German reformers; not until the reign of Mary I (1553–8) were reformers 'given the opportunity to sail for the first time under Protestant colours'.[124] Anti-popery, too, could be an international phenomenon, and not until Elizabeth's reign did an assumption become prevalent that England had a special, or

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movement' to the mid-thirteenth century (p. 35); V. J. Scattergood, *Politics and poetry in the fifteenth Century* (London, 1971).

[118] Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the nation: language, literature and national identity, 1290–1340* (Oxford, 1996), pp. v–vi, 10. This was the case however much monarchs like Henry III, 'not reconciled to the loss piece by piece of the Angevin empire which had in the 1170s stretched from Scotland to the Pyrenees, projected himself as a European monarch in a European court' (p. 5).

[119] *Rotuli parliamentorum* (London, 1783), I, p. 362, quoted in Barnie, *War in medieval society*, pp. 102–3.   [120] Davies, *Domination and conquest*, pp. 4–5.

[121] Wormald, '*Enga Lond*', pp. 3, 18.

[122] For Foxe's *Book of martyrs* as exemplifying the perspective of international Calvinism, only later absorbed into the national myth, see Clark, *Language of liberty*, pp. 47–8. For reassertions of prior national self-awareness in the context of the debate over Foxe, see Patrick Collinson, 'Biblical rhetoric: the English nation and national sentiment in the prophetic mode', and Jesse Lander, "Foxe's" *Books of martyrs*: printing and popularizing the *Acts and monuments*', in Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger, eds., *Religion and culture in Renaissance England* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 15–45, 69–92.   [123] Menna Prestwich, *International Calvinism, 1541–1715* (Oxford, 1985).

[124] David Loades, 'The origins of English Protestant nationalism', *Studies in Church History*, 18 (1982), pp. 297–307, at 298, 302.

even the leading, role in that drama.[125] The church in England only adopted the label 'Protestant' for itself in the first decade of the seventeenth century, and then in order to distinguish itself from both Rome and Geneva: Anglican Protestantism did not become pan-European. In Scotland and Northern Ireland the Reformation went much further: confessional differences have been basic to the emerging 'three kingdoms' explanation of the dynamics of state formation in the British Isles,[126] and when Wales acquired a distinct confessional identity from Protestant Dissent in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, that principality took its place as a fourth component in the model.

Reformation and Counter-Reformation meant that the sixteenth century saw a replay of many of the challenges and crises of the tenth: extensive evidence for national consciousness survives from the sixteenth century to the mid-seventeenth, importantly dependent on a sense of providential destiny.[127] Wormald depicted Richard Hooker giving expression to a doctrine of national unity and purpose that would not have been unfamiliar to Archbishop Wulfstan.[128] The transmission of this sense of Englishness in the interim is now a subject for future research, but

the *onus probandi* lies on those who would deny that such a sense remained embedded in the bulk of the English population throughout this long period. Unless a sense of English identity had penetrated towards the roots of society, it is very difficult to understand how it survived at all…The political education of European peoples recommenced in the aftermath of Rome's fall with the simple but explosive idea that God might single out a distinct culture for His special favour in return for its enforced conformity with His Will as its authorities perceived it. That idea bore its first fruit in the concept of the English. The indestructibility of their political *persona* is the proof of its power.[129]

This formation survived the Reformation and was enhanced by it in a multiplicity of ways. English translations of the Bible consistently rendered as 'nation' a variety of

[125] For tensions between the national and the international in early Protestantism, see for example Anthony Fletcher, 'The first century of English Protestantism and the growth of national identity', *Studies in Church History*, 18 (1982), pp. 309–17; John McKenna, 'How God became an Englishman', in DeLloyd Guth and John McKenna, eds., *Tudor rule and revolution: essays for G. R. Elton from his American friends* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 25–43; Michael McGiffert, 'God's controversy with Jacobean England', *American Historical Review*, 88 (1983), pp. 1151–76; Peter Lake and Maria Dowling, eds., *Protestantism and the national church in sixteenth century England* (London, 1987).

[126] It was a scholar well versed in both Reformation history and sixteenth-century state formation who emphasized the function in this respect of a key English institution: G. R. Elton, 'English national self-consciousness and the parliament in the sixteenth century', in Otto Dann, ed., *Nationalismus in vorindustrieller zeit* (Munich, 1986), pp. 73–81, reprinted in G. R. Elton, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart politics and government*, IV (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 131–43. Elton there rightly avoided the anachronistic terms 'patriotism' and 'nationalism'.

[127] Hans Kohn, 'The genesis and character of English nationalism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1 (1940), pp. 69–94; David Loades, 'The origins of English Protestant nationalism', *Studies in Church History*, 18 (1982), pp. 297–307 ('Such a situation had not been created overnight by the war with Spain'); Anthony Fletcher, 'The first century of English nationalism', ibid., pp. 309–17; Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, ch. 1, 'God's firstborn: England'. Greenfeld's argument that a semantic shift in the use of the term 'nation' from the elite to the people in early sixteenth-century England 'signaled the emergence of the first nation in the world, in the sense in which the word is understood today, and launched the era of nationalism' (p. 6) cannot, however, be sustained in the light of the evidence for earlier centuries. [128] Wormald, '*Enga Lond*', p. 18. [129] Ibid.

words in Hebrew and Greek which were not synonymous with that term. In this usage, the vernacular also went far beyond the Latin Vulgate Bible, and is not to be explained by it.[130] The vernacular did not have to carry a national message, but it did so as men read the translated Scriptures as a ratification of providential national identity. The individual was tied to the polity by allegiance, and Christianity was the ideology that interpreted that tie. It was an ideologically engendered allegiance which characterized English society in the long eighteenth century, and which fell into schism in 1776 at a date demonstrably before the emergence of 'nationalism' as we now know it.

Protestantism was never just one thing. A theoretically articulate history of the Church of England, including its ecclesiology, ecclesiastical polity, and political theory, would suggest cautions. However deep-rooted our assumptions, it may be questioned whether 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' were simple, antithetical ontological identities. They are more intelligible as political labels, generated in a tactical context, and used with all the tactical subtleties that normally surround such terms. 'Protestantism' was not a fixed, unambiguous concept which could be used to explain that ambiguous one, national identity. Into the eighteenth century many argued, from a low church and dissenting stance, that the Church of England was not Protestant – that it was still compromised by popish survivals. Others, on the high church wing, also argued that the Church of England was not Protestant – that it possessed continuity with the medieval church. Historians may not simply announce that 'England was a Protestant country', that it embodied 'Protestantism', or claim that they can easily read off, from any such religious identity, data about national identity or patriotism. Religion mattered nevertheless. If 'nationalism' is an anachronistic term for the form taken by national identities before the nineteenth century,[131] and if shared history, law, and dynastic allegiance constituted an alternative, it is possible to see how large a part religion played in that matrix of ideas.

The diversity of 'Protestantism' had major practical significance. Denominations not in communion with the see of Rome differed widely. They differed in ecclesiastical polity: some were episcopalian, others presbyterian, others congregational. They differed in theology: some were Trinitarian, some Arian, some Socinian. In soteriology, some were predestinarian, some double predestinarian, some Arminian. Some adhered to solafidianism, others not. Some had an apocalyptic eschatology; some, in addition, were millenarian; others not. They differed in pastoral strategies: some were revivalist; others were quietist. They were as different as Methodists, Baptists, Quakers, and continental European migrants, Lutheran and Calvinist. Nor were these things merely grit in the machinery: they were the machinery itself, centrally connecting with political thought and political conduct.[132]

These are not just optional finer points, 'subtle divisions'.[133] The major episodes of state aggregation and disaggregation throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were profoundly related to differences, even conflicts, *within* Protestantism. It would be hard to explain the Bishops' Wars of 1639–40, the proximate cause of the 'English' Civil War, as anything else. A shared 'Protestantism' was not enough in the

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[130] The Authorized Version employs 'nation' 454 times, where the Vulgate used 'natio' on only 100 occasions, and with different meanings: Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, pp. 52–3; Gillian Brennan, 'Patriotism, language and power: English translations of the Bible, 1520–1580', *History Workshop Journal*, 27 (1989), pp. 18–36.

[131] For this argument, see Clark, *Language of liberty*, pp. 19–20, 46–62.

[132] Ibid., pp. 1–45, 303–81.   [133] Colley, *Britons*, p. 18.

eighteenth century to bring many of the Protestant Irish into the Anglo-Scots Union of 1707, even if Britain engaged in war with a Catholic power.[134] Within England, the confessional basis of electoral behaviour into the nineteenth century has been an emerging theme of research,[135] but this was chiefly a matter of the antagonism between the Church of England and Protestant Dissent which led to partial disestablishment and the fracturing of the confessional unity of the polity.[136] In 1982, Professor Robbins had rightly given prominence to the argument that 'The Christian religion in the British Isles, in its divided condition, has…been deeply involved in the cultural and political divisions of modern Britain and Ireland' in the nineteenth century.[137] In 1988, he demonstrated at length this central point for England's relations with Scotland and Wales;[138] it applies to domestic English identities also.

A perspective beginning in 1707 would also obscure the role of the church in state formation, since the reversion to a presbyterian organization for the Scots church had been imposed by William III in 1689 in response to the dynastic disloyalty of Scots episcopalians to the new regime: 1707 was exceptional in entrenching religious difference as a route to political uniformity. The role of religious uniformity as a route to political unification had been clear in the history of the British Isles for centuries; it was reasserted in the Union with Wales of 1536 and in the Union with Scotland of 1603, came under increasing strain in British–colonial relations, decisively failed in 1776, but was reasserted in Ireland in 1798. No study could be complete which omitted these wider features in order to make plausible a secularized picture of a 'short eighteenth century'.

The greatest reverse for the British state, the loss of the American colonies, cannot be understood apart from the denominational dynamics that gave social shape to political theories.[139] 'Protestantism' was indeed shared in Britain and America; this did not prevent the revolution. This argument about America will come as no surprise to historians of the British Isles who are used to dealing with the Civil War, the Glorious Revolution, the Irish rebellion of 1798, and Catholic Emancipation. In the face of the threat of the return of a Catholic Stuart dynasty, many Protestants in Britain did make

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[134] From a large literature, see the articles collected in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 335, Michael O'Dea and Kevin Whelan, eds., *Nations and nationalisms: France, Britain, Ireland and the eighteenth-century context* (Oxford, 1995), especially Thomas Bartlett, 'Protestant nationalism in eighteenth-century Ireland', pp. 79–88, and Kevin Whelan, 'United and disunited Irishmen: the discourse of sectarianism in the 1790s', pp. 231–47.

[135] John Vincent, *Pollbooks: how Victorians voted* (Cambridge, 1967), revealed denominational patterns not explored for an earlier century until John A. Phillips, *Electoral behavior in unreformed England* (Princeton, 1982); idem, *The great Reform Bill in the boroughs: English electoral behaviour, 1818–1841* (Oxford, 1992); Frank O'Gorman, *Voters, patrons and parties: the unreformed electoral system of Hanoverian England, 1734–1832* (Oxford, 1989).

[136] P. M. H. Bell, *Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales* (London, 1969); William H. Mackintosh, *Disestablishment and liberation: the movement for the separation of the Anglican Church from state control* (London, 1972).

[137] Keith Robbins, 'Religion and identity in modern British history (presidential address)', *Studies in Church History*, 18 (1982), pp. 465–87, at 465; idem, 'An imperial and multinational polity: the scene from the centre, 1832–1922', in Grant and Stringer, eds., *Uniting the kingdom?*, pp. 244–54. [138] Robbins, *Nineteenth century Britain*, pp. 63–96.

[139] For the variety of identities within the empire, rather than a simple polarity between Catholic and Protestant, see Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, eds., *Colonial identity in the Atlantic world, 1500–1800* (Princeton, 1987); Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Strangers within the realm: cultural margins of the first British empire* (Chapel Hill, 1991).

common cause (though many did not: even here, Protestantism was a weak cement). But Jacobitism was *la révolution manquée*, the revolution that did not happen. The revolution that did happen, the American Revolution, a civil war among 'Protestants' that changed Anglophone history irreversibly and fundamentally, features too little in the historiography of the British Isles.

Protestantism alone was not enough. In that fertile seed-bed of Dissenting Protestant denominations, the Thirteen Colonies, the sects played no clear role in generating a shared American identity before 1776. Only in England did the Henrician union of church and state provide a matrix within which a sense of normative ethical identity might ideally coincide with a political unit. It was the church, not the sects, which possessed both an institutional, legal expression and a clear sense of national identity. Despite its internal differences, Anglicanism, not Protestantism, should be our key term.

VI

Neither war, nor law, nor religion alone created an English identity, but their interaction in a providential setting. Tracing their contributions shows how national consciousness can be discerned long before the 'nationalism' classically exemplified in 1848 or sometimes ante-dated to 1707. It reveals that processes of state formation were much older than the long eighteenth century; that their nature was essentially dynastic; that the influence of religion was profound long before the Reformation: Protestantism is not the key.[140] 'British' was an identity similarly owed to the Union of crowns in 1603 and the creation of a shared legal matrix of 'nationality' by *Calvin's Case* (1608), and long preceded any whig cultural project associated with the Union of legislatures of 1707.[141]

A new identity did not necessarily erase older ones. The English did not cease to speak of 'Englishness' in 1603 or 1707: as their horizons widened, they even sometimes used 'England' and 'English' to stand for all the communities of the archipelago. Even Edmund Burke (1729–97), a loyal Irishman, could write of himself as 'an English-man'[142] to indicate his second identity as a member of the larger polity where one might now expect him to use 'British': nineteenth-century nationalism had not yet created its antagonisms. Into the nineteenth century, travellers within the British Isles nevertheless remained acutely aware of differences between Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and England, and often found that travel only made them more appreciative of, and attached to, their identities as English, Irish, Scots, or Welsh. Regional differences

[140] It is relevant that the nationalism of 1848 was confined by no religious boundaries and was present in Roman Catholic states as well as in countries with different balances between Protestant denominations to England's.

[141] Bruce Galloway, *The Union of England and Scotland, 1603–1608* (Edinburgh, 1986). Only an historiographical neglect of law and religion could divert attention away from the Union of 1603 and that seminal legal elucidation of it, *Calvin's Case*, towards the Union of 1707. Galloway's study made clear that James I intended to secure a measure of religious uniformity between his two kingdoms (p. 144): the Union of 1603 had from the outset ecclesiological implications which the Union of 1707 lacked, a feature of 1603 which the failure of the policies of Charles I and Laud later obscured. For the vagueness of the idea of Britain in 1603 (as in 1707), see Jenny Wormald, 'James VI, James I and the identity of Britain', in Bradshaw and Morrill, eds., *The British problem, c. 1534–1707*, pp. 148–71.

[142] Burke to Adrien Duport [post 29 Mar. 1790], in T. W. Copeland et al., eds., *The correspondence of Edmund Burke* (10 vols., Cambridge, 1958–78), VI, p. 106.

within these countries were similarly emphasized; a shared British identity was appealed to only in specific contexts and for specific purposes, as a category inclusive of sectional identities, not as an identity which replaced its components. A 'British constitution', or 'British soldiers' engaged in 'British expeditions', did not necessarily imply an overriding British identity.[143]

'British' as a term in general usage has therefore had at least two senses. One was a spontaneous or encouraged Unionist identity allegedly felt equally by Scots, Irish, Welsh, and English. This may indeed have been problematic. But another usage was more prevalent: as employed by the four groups, usually when abroad, 'British' was an official, political euphemism for one's sectional identity, whether English, Welsh, Irish, or Scots: it was to a considerable degree synonymous with, and not a substitute for, sectional national identities. If so, it matters less that 'British' in the sense of the whig defenders of 1707 had shallow foundations: 'Britishness' in its prevalent sense rested in large part on the ancient and massive foundations of Englishness, and the equally ancient if differently formulated identities of England's neighbours.[144]

On the basis of evidence reviewed above, we can be more cautious of deconstructionist programmes. Britain was not invented; it developed. It was not devised by a small number of cultural entrepreneurs, acting like advertising executives to package and market a new product; it grew, the often unintended result of actions by men and women in many walks of life, often, too, the result of conflicts and cross-purposes. Consequently, it missed the point to argue that 'Britain' was invented recently: its origins in England (not to mention Wales and Scotland) were very remote indeed. Those origins are often beyond the reach of present-day categories: one scholar has postponed the arrival of the abstract 'state' in England until it was given analytical expression in the late nineteenth century by the philosopher T. H. Green.[145]

The long track records of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales have given rise to a variety of forms of national identity, continually evolving yet displaying long continuities; conceptualized by elites, yet validated by peoples; widely contested, yet widely held.[146] English history has always been a counterpoint of cosmopolitanism and introversion, both themes being present together. In general, the pattern within the British Isles has been the resilience of a diverse and plural system of identities, rather than the rigidity but final shattering of an unitary one.[147] This produced a polity with strengths and weaknesses: although it could not mobilize an ethnically homogeneous 'people', it had the strength of accommodating regional differences in a system which imposed on England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales no novel, abstract formula.[148] It had the greater strength of seldom demanding of its members a deeper acknowl-

[143] This paragraph draws on the research of Marjorie Morgan, 'The terminology of national identity in Victorian Britain'. This research will be embodied in Professor Morgan's book, *National identities and travel in Victorian Britain* (London, forthcoming).

[144] For this argument see Newman, *Rise of English nationalism*. It is nowhere addressed in *Britons*.

[145] James Meadowcroft, *Conceptualising the state: innovation and dispute in British political thought, 1880–1914* (Oxford, 1995), p. 8.

[146] For an overview of identities within the British Isles to the eighteenth century, expressed as a deliberate challenge to Hobsbawm's *Nations and nationalism since 1780*, see Adrian Hastings, *The construction of nationhood: ethnicity, religion and nationalism* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 1–95.

[147] As was argued, for example, in Colls and Dodd, eds., *Englishness*.

[148] In that sense, any 'Britishness' built around the Union of 1707 was very different from American identity built around the events of 1776 or 1787.

edgement of kinship with their neighbours than they were willing, informally, to give.[149]

The experience of imperial expansion and major war in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries never persuaded the English at least that they were a 'race':[150] lacking this idea and its attendant problems, the United Kingdom's plural national identities showed themselves to be, in functional terms, highly effective in two world wars. With the exception of southern Ireland (scarcely a modern or a postmodern problem) the United Kingdom survived the twentieth century with its unities impaired far less than other composite states like Russia and Austria-Hungary. When the challenge of European integration became insistent from the 1980s, the UK's identities – in part a working survival from the old regime – did not fade away (there was no historical logic that demanded that they do so). On the contrary, people with political agendas to pursue had to find means of dehistoricizing those identities, suppressing the historical dimension in which public policy issues had long been discussed. But these are questions with the most explosive practical consequences. Whether some recent historians of the subject will prove in this context to be merely sorcerer's apprentices is a matter for urgent public as well as professional concern.

[149] For a survey which gives due weight to these themes, see Keith Robbins, *Great Britain: ideas, institutions and the idea of Britishness* (London, 1998).

[150] The term 'race' was still found in English discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but chiefly as synonymous with the older sense of historically conditioned identity. England was distinguished from twentieth-century Germany, Italy, France, and Spain by its lack of formal racialist doctrine or consciousness. In that sense, England enjoyed an important legacy of its ancien regime. How the idea of 'race' functioned within Irish and Scots nationalism is a question not examined here. Nor is the question whether postmodernists neglected to extend their analysis to such phenomena.