THE IDEOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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Contents

CHAPTER I

Introduction: state and empire in British history

> . . . the word, *empire*, conveys an idea of a vast territory, composed of various people; whereas that of *kingdom*, implies, one more bounded; and intimates the unity of that nation, of which it is formed.[1]

By the second quarter of the eighteenth century, the British Empire comprehended the United Kingdom of Great Britain, Ireland, the islands of the Caribbean and the British mainland colonies of North America.[2] The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by a common religion and by the Royal Navy. The gentle, but powerful influence of laws and manners had gradually cemented the union of the provinces. Their free, white inhabitants enjoyed and produced the advantages of wealth and luxury. The image of a free constitution was preserved with a decent reverence. The Hanoverian kings appeared to possess the sovereign authority, and devolved on their parliaments all the executive powers of government. During a crucial period of almost fourscore years (1688–1760), the public administration was conducted by a succession of Whig politicians. It is the design of this, and of the succeeding chapters, to describe the ideological origins of their empire, though not to deduce the most important circumstances of its decline and fall: the American Revolution, which dismembered the British Atlantic Empire, lies beyond the immediate scope of this book.

The history of the rise, decline and fall of the British Empire has most often been told as the story of an empire whose foundations lay in India during the second half of the eighteenth century.[3] That empire formally

[1] John Trusler, *The Difference, Between Words, Esteemed Synonymous, in the English Language*, 2 vols. (London, 1766), II, 15.

[2] C. H. Firth, '"The British Empire"', *Scottish Historical Review*, 15 (1918), 185–9; James Truslow Adams, 'On the Term "British Empire"', *American Historical Review*, 27 (1922), 485–9.

[3] From J. Holland Rose, A. P. Newton and E. A. Benians (gen. eds.), *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, 9 vols. (Cambridge, 1929–61) to Wm. Roger Louis (gen. ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1998–99).

encompassed parts of South Asia, Australasia, Africa and the Americas. Its ascent began with British victory at the battle of Plassey in 1757, continued almost unabated in South Asia and the Pacific until the end of the Napoleonic Wars, resumed momentum in the latter half of the nineteenth century during the European 'scramble for Africa', and then unravelled definitively during and after the Second World War. William Pitt was its midwife, Lord Mountbatten its sexton and Winston Churchill its chief mourner in Britain. Its ghost lives on in the form of the Commonwealth; its sole remains are the handful of United Kingdom Overseas Territories, from Bermuda to the Pitcairn Islands.[4] In this account, the American Revolution and its aftermath divided the two (supposedly distinct) Empires, chronologically, geographically and institutionally. The Peace of Paris that ended the Seven Years War in 1763 marked the end of French imperial power in North America and South Asia. Twenty years later, in 1783, the Peace of Paris by which Britain acknowledged the independence of the United States of America marked the beginnings of a newly configured British Atlantic Empire, still including the Caribbean islands and the remaining parts of British North America; it also signalled the British Empire's decisive 'swing to the east' into the Indian and Pacific oceans.[5] Historians of the eighteenth-century British Empire have protested against any easy separation between the 'First' and 'Second' British Empires on the grounds that the two overlapped in time, that they shared common purposes and personnel, and that the differences between the maritime, commercial colonies of settlement in North America and the military, territorial colonies of conquest in India have been crudely overdrawn.[6] Nevertheless, among historians, and more generally in the popular imagination, the British Empire still denotes that 'Second' Empire, which was founded in the late eighteenth century and whose character distinguished it decisively from the 'Old Colonial System' of the British Atlantic world that had gone before it.[7]

[4] For instance, most recently, in Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (London, 1994), Denis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience, From 1765 to the Present* (London, 1996) and P. J. Marshall (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1996); exceptions are Angus Calder, *Revolutionary Empire: The Rise of the English-Speaking Peoples from the Fifteenth Century to the 1780s* (London, 1981) and T. O. Lloyd, *The British Empire 1558–1983* (Oxford, 1984).

[5] V. T. Harlow, *The Founding of the Second British Empire, 1763–1793*, 2 vols. (London, 1952–64).

[6] Peter Marshall, 'The First and Second British Empires: A Question of Demarcation', *History*, 49 (1964), 13–23; Philip Lawson, 'The Missing Link: The Imperial Dimension in Understanding Hanoverian Britain', *The Historical Journal*, 29 (1986), 747–51; P. J. Marshall, 'Britain and the World in the Eighteenth Century: 1, Reshaping the Empire', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 8 (1998), 1–18.

[7] G. L. Beer, *The Origins of the British Colonial System 1578–1660* (London, 1908).

The conflation of British Imperial history with the history of the Second British Empire has encouraged the separation of the history of Britain and Ireland from the history of the Empire itself.[8] 'British' history is assumed to mean 'domestic' history; Imperial history implies extra-territorial history. This distinction was at least understandable, if not defensible, as long as the Empire was assumed to be divided from the metropole by vast physical distances, to be overwhelmingly distinct in its racial composition, and to be dependent upon, rather than formally equal with, Britain itself. The attributed character of the Second British Empire – as an empire founded on military conquest, racial subjection, economic exploitation and territorial expansion – rendered it incompatible with metropolitan norms of liberty, equality and the rule of law, and demanded that the Empire be exoticised and further differentiated from domestic history. The purported character of the First British Empire – as 'for the most part a maritime empire, an oceanic empire of trade and settlement, not an empire of conquest; an empire defended by ships, not troops'[9] – assimilated it more closely to the domestic histories of the Three Kingdoms by making it the outgrowth of British norms, exported and fostered by metropolitan migrants. The revolutionary crisis in the British Atlantic world, between 1763 and 1783, revealed the practical and theoretical limits of any such assimilation. Thereafter, the former colonies became part of the history of the United States. This in turn facilitated the identification of the history of the British Empire with the history of the Second Empire and fostered the continuing disjuncture between 'British' and 'Imperial' histories.

The Ideological Origins of the British Empire attempts to reintegrate the history of the British Empire with the history of early-modern Britain on the ground of intellectual history. This approach faces its own difficulties, in that the history of political thought has more often treated the history of ideas of the state than it has the concepts of empire, at least as that term has been vulgarly understood.[10] Political thought is, by definition, the

[8] A note on terminology: 'Britain' is used either as a geographical expression, to refer to the island encompassing England, Wales and Scotland, or as a shorthand political term, to denote the United Kingdom of Great Britain created by the Anglo-Scottish union of 1707; 'Britain and Ireland' is taken to be synonymous with the 'Three Kingdoms' of England, Scotland and Ireland throughout the period before 1707. 'British Isles' is only used when it expresses the vision of a particular author – for example, Edmund Spenser; 'British' is likewise not held to include 'Irish', except when particular authors employed it otherwise.

[9] Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, *The New Cambridge History of India*, III.4 (Cambridge, 1994), 4.

[10] For the emergence of concepts of the state in competition with ideologies of empire see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1978), I, 8–12; James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity* (Cambridge, 1995), 15–17.

history of the *polis*, the self-contained, firmly bounded, sovereign and integrated community that preceded and sometimes shadowed the history of empire and that paralleled and ultimately overtook that history during the age of the great nation-states. For this reason, the British Empire has not been an actor in the history of political thought, any more than political thought has generally been hospitable to considering the ideologies of empire. The very pursuit of an intellectual history for the British Empire has been dismissed by historians who have described seventeenth-century arguments regarding the British Empire as 'intellectually of no … commanding calibre', and have counselled that '[t]o look for any significant intellectual or ideological contribution to the ordering of empire in the first two decades of George III's reign would seem at first sight to be a barren task'.[11] This is symptomatic of a more lasting unwillingness to consider ideologies of empire as part of political theory or the history of political thought.[12] However, the study of imperial ideologies can clarify the limits of political theory studied on the unexamined principle that it encompasses solely the theory of the state and its ideological predecessors.[13] It is therefore essential to recover the intellectual history of the British Empire from the 'fit of absence of mind' into which it has fallen.[14]

This study understands the term 'ideology' in two senses: first, in the programmatic sense of a systematic model of how society functions and second, as a world-view which is perceived as contestable by those who do not share it.[15] This latter sense does not imply that such an ideology should necessarily be exposed as irrational because it can be identified as simply the expression of sectional interests; rather, it implies that contemporaries may have seen such an interconnected set of beliefs as both

[11] Klaus E. Knorr, *British Colonial Theories 1570–1850* (Toronto, 1944), 62; P. J. Marshall, 'Empire and Authority in the Later Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 15 (1987), 105.

[12] Though for early attempts to consider this problem, from the dying decades of the British Empire, see Sir Ernest Barker, *The Ideas and Ideals of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1941), George Bennett (ed.), *The Concept of Empire: Burke to Attlee, 1774–1947* (London, 1953) and Eric Stokes, *The Political Ideas of English Imperialism: An Inaugural Lecture Given in the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (Oxford, 1960).

[13] Tully, *Strange Multiplicity*, 58–98.

[14] Compare Peter N. Miller, *Defining the Common Good: Empire, Religion and Philosophy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1994); Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500 – c. 1800* (New Haven, 1995); David Armitage (ed.), *Theories of Empire, 1450–1800* (Aldershot, 1998).

[15] Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge, 1981), 10; Keith Michael Baker, 'On the Problem of the Ideological Origins of the French Revolution', in Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1990), 17–18.

argumentatively flawed and compromised by needs which they did not share. This spirit of ideological critique could see such beliefs as rationally indefensible, or even false, just because they answered to a particular set of needs; more importantly, rational disagreement about the status of those beliefs rendered them the product of contemporary political and philosophical argument. The purpose of this study is therefore not to expose beliefs about the British Empire as either true or false, but rather to show the ways in which the constitutive elements of various conceptions of the British Empire arose in the competitive context of political argument. It deploys resources from a wider tradition of political thought, stretching back to classical sources in ancient Greece and, especially, Rome, but also encompassing contemporary Spain and the United Provinces, as part of a wider European dialogue within which the various empires were defined and defended.[16] Its purpose is therefore not to claim that the origins of the British Empire can be found only in ideology; rather, it seeks to locate the origins of the ideological definition of empire in Britain, Ireland and the wider Atlantic world.

Any search for origins is, of course, fraught with a basic conceptual ambiguity. An origin can be either a beginning or a cause, a logical and chronological *terminus a quo*, or the starting-point from which a chain of consequences derives. 'In popular usage, an origin is a beginning which explains', warned Marc Bloch. 'Worse still, a beginning which is a complete explanation. There lies the ambiguity, there the danger!' To discover the etymology of a word does nothing to explain its present meaning, though the gap between its etymological root and its current usage can be historically revealing, but only if approached contextually. 'In a word, a historical phenomenon can never be understood apart from its moment in time.'[17] Similarly, the context within which a concept emerges does not determine its future usage, though the history of its usage across time will reveal a great deal about the history of the later contexts within which it was deployed. The origins of a concept, as of any other object of historical inquiry, are not necessarily connected to any later outcome, causally or otherwise: aetiology is not simply teleology in reverse. Conversely, present usage or practice offers no sure guide to the origins of a concept or activity.

> No matter how perfectly you have understood the *usefulness* of any physiological organ (or legal institution, social custom, political usage, art form or religious

[16] On which see generally Pagden, *Lords of All the World*.

[17] Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (New York, 1953), 30, 32–3, 35.

rite) you have not yet thereby grasped how it emerged . . . the whole history of a 'thing,' an organ, a tradition, can to this extent be a continuous chain of signs, continually revealing new interpretations and adaptations, the causes of which need not be connected even amongst themselves, but rather sometimes just follow and replace one another at random.

Meaning cannot therefore be identified with purpose, least of all in the case of a concept, of which '[t]he form is fluid, the "meaning" even more so'.[18]

Confusion between origins as beginnings and origins as causes has bedevilled the history of the British Empire at least since the eighteenth century. The chronological origins of the British Empire have most often been traced back to the reign of Elizabeth I, and hence to the maritime exploits of her English sailors. This chronology defined the Empire as Protestant, *Anglo*-British, benign and extra-European, because it originated in post-Reformation, specifically English activities, was the product of navies not armies, and was conducted across vast oceanic expanses, far from the metropolis.[19] This was the vision of imperial origins emblematised in Millais's 'The Boyhood of Raleigh' (1870), itself inspired by the painter's reading of J. A. Froude's essay on the Elizabethan sea-dogs, 'England's Forgotten Worthies' (1852).[20] More recent historians have espoused a similar chronology but for different reasons, by finding the origins of British imperialism in English colonialism on the Celtic crescent surrounding the English core-state. This was still an Anglo-British imperialism, though it was neither benign nor exotic. External 'imperialism' was the offspring of 'internal colonialism', as the English developed their ideologies of racial supremacy, political hegemony, cultural superiority and divinely appointed civilising mission in their relations with a 'Celtic fringe', beginning in Ireland in the sixteenth century.[21] Maintaining the content, but disputing the chronology, an alternative aetiology for English imperialism – defined by its supremacist racism, its crusading national identity and its ideology of conquest – has instead been traced to the twelfth century, and the

[18] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge, 1994), 55.

[19] Cynthia Fansler Behrman, *Victorian Myths of the Sea* (Athens, Ohio, 1977), 30–7, 113–16.

[20] [J. A. Froude,] 'England's Forgotten Worthies', *The Westminster Review*, n.s. 2, 1 (July 1852), 29; M. H. Spielman, *Millais and His Works* (Edinburgh, 1898), 124; John Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge, 1981), 231–2.

[21] Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (London, 1975); Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford, 1985); Hugh Kearney, *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations* (Cambridge, 1989), 106–27.

attempted anglicisation of Ireland, Scotland and Wales chronicled in the works of William of Malmesbury and Gerald of Wales.[22] This thesis in turn disrupts any continuity between state-formation and empire-building by making English imperialism a solely archipelagic phenomenon whose continuities with extra-British empire-building were tenuous and analogical. In reaction, other historians, attempting to save the chronology of origins but extend its scope forward from the sixteenth century, have 'unearthed in protestant religious consciousness a root, perhaps even the taproot, of English imperialism';[23] even more precisely, the 'origins of Anglo-British imperialism' have been located in the Anglo-Scottish propaganda wars of the mid-sixteenth century.[24]

This study reconsiders both the traditional and more recent accounts of the ideological origins of the British Empire by tracing the histories both of the concept of the British Empire and of the different conceptions of that empire from the mid-sixteenth century to the mid-eighteenth century.[25] The 'concept' of the British Empire means the idea that an identifiable political community existed to which the term 'empire' could be fittingly applied and which was recognisably British, rather than, for example, Roman, French or English. It will be argued that the emergence of the concept of the 'British Empire' as a political community encompassing England and Wales, Scotland, Protestant Ireland, the British islands of the Caribbean and the mainland colonies of North America, was long drawn out, and only achieved by the late seventeenth century at the earliest. This was not because the conceptual language of Britishness was lacking; rather, it had been used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to describe less expansive communities within the Three Kingdoms of Britain and Ireland. Nor was it because the language of 'empire' was absent from British political discourse: it too was used in more restricted senses. Only in the first half of the eighteenth century, it will be argued, did the two languages coincide to provide the conception of that larger community within

[22] John Gillingham, 'Images of Ireland 1170–1600: The Origins of English Imperialism', *History Today*, 37, 2 (Feb. 1987), 16–22; Gillingham, 'The Beginnings of English Imperialism', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 5 (1992), 392–409; Rees Davies, 'The English State and the "Celtic" Peoples 1100–1400', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 6 (1993), 1–14.

[23] Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London, 1988), 5.

[24] Roger A. Mason, 'The Scottish Reformation and the Origins of Anglo-British Imperialism', in Mason (ed.), *Scots and Britons: Scottish Political Thought and the Union of 1603* (Cambridge, 1994), 161–86.

[25] For the distinction between 'concepts' and 'conceptions' see, for example, Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously*, rev. edn (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), 134–6.

which the Three Kingdoms of Britain and Ireland and the English-speaking islands, colonies, plantations and territories of the western hemisphere were all members – albeit, unequal members – of a single political body known as the 'British Empire'.

The unifying concept of the British Empire left generous room for different conceptions of that Empire. By the 1730s, an integrated concept of the British Empire could be found in the political writings of creole elites and imperial officials throughout the British Atlantic world. It was yoked to a particular conception of the Empire, espoused in particular by oppositional politicians within Britain, that became dominant (though it did not remain unchallenged). According to this conception, the British Empire had certain characteristics which distinguished it both from past empires and from contemporary imperial polities such as the Spanish Monarchy. Its inhabitants believed it to be primarily Protestant, despite the variety even of Protestant denominations that could be found within the Three Kingdoms and among the islands and colonies; most importantly, it was not Catholic, despite the obvious presence of a persistent Catholic majority in Ireland and of other pockets of Roman Catholicism, for instance in Maryland.

The British Empire was an arena of hemispheric and international trade. Its character was therefore commercial. The attachment to commerce – and the means by which commerce connected the various parts of the Empire to one another – made the British Empire different from its predecessors or its rivals, most of which (it was believed) had been integrated by force, or had been operated more for reasons of power (often over subject peoples) than plenty. For the far-flung British Empire to be successful in its commerce, it had also to be maritime. The British dominions were not all contiguous, and the richest parts of the Empire, such as Barbados and Jamaica, were separated both from the Three Kingdoms and from the mainland colonies by vast oceanic expanses. The waters around Britain itself had always been defended by the Royal Navy, and a series of naval myths provided the legendary foundations for such maritime supremacy. Protestantism, oceanic commerce and mastery of the seas provided bastions to protect the freedom of inhabitants of the British Empire. That freedom found its institutional expression in Parliament, the law, property and rights, all of which were exported throughout the British Atlantic world. Such freedom also allowed the British, uniquely, to combine the classically incompatible ideals of liberty and empire. In sum, the British Empire was, above all and beyond all other such polities, Protestant, commercial, maritime and free.

The concept of a British Empire had its roots within the Three Kingdoms of Britain and Ireland; however, to become elaborated in its later, more expansive form, it had to overcome some formidable conceptual and practical obstacles. The collision between an Erastian English church and a Presbyterian Scottish kirk obviated the emergence of a pan-British ecclesiology and exacerbated the denominational diversity of the British Atlantic world. The British Empire therefore had no unitary theological foundation, though the common Protestantism of the majority of its inhabitants distinguished it sufficiently from the Spanish and French monarchies. Secular political thought defined the community in terms that could accommodate the contiguous territories of a composite monarchy and even encompass an ethnic definition of community that extended to Ireland, but nonetheless proved resistant to imagining colonies and factories as members of the polity before the rise of mercantilist thought in the period after the Restoration. Political economy in turn redefined the nature of British maritime dominion, which under the Stuarts had implied exclusive British *imperium* solely over home waters; this was replaced by a conception of *mare liberum* on the oceans which underpinned arguments for the free circulation of trade around the Atlantic world.

The British Atlantic world could therefore only be conceived of as a single political community once the intellectual limits to its growth had been overcome in an era of expanding commerce and reform in colonial government. The impetus of political contention helped to generate a distinctive ideology for the Empire, but only once a pan-Atlantic conception of the British Empire had been generated by a cadre of provincials and imperial officials beyond the metropolis itself in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. That conception sprang initially from Britain's imperial provinces; when metropolitans took it up later, theirs would be the derivative discourse, not the colonists'. The ideological definition of the British state, and the conceptualisation of its relationship with its dependencies, was therefore neither a solely metropolitan nor an exclusively provincial achievement: it was a shared conception of the British Empire that could describe a community and provide a distinguishable character for it. However, the instabilities which marked both the concept and the conception from their origins in debates within the Three Kingdoms would ultimately create the ideological conditions for the debate preceding and surrounding the American Revolution. The ideological origins of the British Empire also constituted the ideological origins of the American

Revolution;[26] the decline, fall and reconstruction of the British Atlantic Empire can therefore be traced back to the limitations and instabilities of the British state.

'[H]istory devises reason why the lessons of past empire do not apply to ours', remarked J. A. Hobson in 1902.[27] The objects of his criticism were those nineteenth-century English historians who denied the British Empire any origins or antecedents at all and thereby left it suspended, statically, outside history and beyond the reach of the conventional compulsions of imperial decline and fall (or expansion and overstretch). Hobson accurately diagnosed the fact that most of the major modes within which British history has been written since the nineteenth century had been inhospitable to Imperial history. This was partly the result of the hegemony of English history and historians, for whom England stood proxy for the United Kingdom, and who maintained a willed forgetfulness about the rest of Britain, Ireland and the Empire.[28] Their grand narratives produced an English exceptionalism that sustained an insular account of national history and proved increasingly impregnable to the history of the Empire. For example, the historiography of English religion told the history of the Church *in* England as the story of the Church *of* England, a story that might begin with St Augustine of Canterbury, Bede, or at least Wycliffe, but that found its lasting incarnation in the Erastian Church founded under Henry VIII at the English Reformation.[29] That Church had, of course, expanded across the globe to create a worldwide communion, but so had the Dissenting and Nonconformist denominations. The Church of England never became a unified imperial Church, least of all in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the existence of discrete Church establishments in Scotland, Ireland and Wales meant that the English Church remained but one ecclesiastical body within a more extensive Anglo-British state (as constituted by the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707). English ecclesiastical history could thus claim a lengthy pedigree, and even a providential charter for insularity, but it did little to encourage an ampler imperial perspective.

[26] Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).
[27] J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, 3rd edn. (London, 1938), 221.
[28] J. G. A. Pocock, 'The Limits and Divisions of British History: In Search of the Unknown Subject', *American Historical Review*, 87 (1982), 311–14.
[29] Michael Bentley, 'The British State and its Historiography', in Wim Blockmans and Jean-Philippe Genet (eds.), *Visions sur le développement des états européens: théories et historiographies de l'état moderne* (Rome, 1993), 154, 162–4.

The Whig history of the constitution proved similarly resistant to the incorporation of Imperial history. That resistance can be traced back in part to the Henrician Reformation, when the English Parliament had declared in the preamble to the Act in Restraint of Appeals (1533) that 'this realm of England is an empire, entire of itself', independent of all external authority and free of any entanglements, whether in Europe or further abroad. Though the exact import of those words has been much debated,[30] they were held to 'assert that our king is equally sovereign and independent within these his dominions, as any emperor is in his empire', in the words of William Blackstone.[31] Regal independence represented national independence, and therefore associated the constitutional, statutary language of 'empire' with isolation and insularity. From the era of the Huguenot historian Paul de Rapin-Thoyras, a generation after the Glorious Revolution, until the age of Macaulay in the mid-nineteenth century and beyond, the constitution was of greater interest to Whig historians than expansion.[32]

Constitutional liberty and imperial expansion seemed to be necessarily incompatible to many Whigs and to their ideological heirs. The collision between empire and liberty lay at the heart of the debate surrounding the American Revolutionary crisis, both for the Whiggish supporters of American independence and for their sympathisers in Britain.[33] Yet even that was only one moment in a seemingly eternal drama of the contention between *imperium* and *libertas* that was sure to be played out again in the Second British Empire.[34] 'Is it not just possible that we may become corrupted at home by the reaction of arbitrary political maxims in the East upon our domestic politics, just as Greece and Rome were demoralised by their contact with Asia?' asked Richard Cobden in 1860.[35] 'Not merely is the reaction possible, it is inevitable', replied Hobson: 'the spirit, the policy, and the methods of Imperialism are hostile to the institutions of popular

[30] G. L. Harriss, 'Medieval Government and Statecraft', *Past and Present*, 25 (July 1963), 9–12; G. R. Elton, 'The Tudor Revolution: A Reply', *Past and Present*, 29 (Dec. 1964), 30–6; Harriss, 'A Revolution in Tudor History?' *Past and Present*, 31 (July 1965), 87–8; G. D. Nicholson, 'The Nature and Function of Historical Argument in the Henrician Reformation' (Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge, 1977), 171–80; John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford, 1988), 369–76.

[31] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 4 vols. (London, 1765–9), I, 235.

[32] Burrow, *A Liberal Descent*, 233, 247–8.

[33] H. Trevor Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1965).

[34] Miles Taylor, 'Imperium et Libertas? Rethinking the Radical Critique of Imperialism during the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 19 (1991), 1–23.

[35] Richard Cobden to William Hargreaves, 4 August 1860, in John Morley, *The Life of Richard Cobden*, 2 vols. (London, 1881), II, 361.

self-government'.[36] Though most nineteenth-century Liberals and even Radicals might not have shared these fundamentally classicising fears of Asiatic luxury, such anxieties were symptomatic of a wider unwillingness to admit the Empire within the history of the metropolitan state itself, for fear of corrupting 'domestic politics'.[37] The potential for the incompatibility of empire and liberty was one of the great legacies of the First British Empire to the Second; the genesis and afterlife of the argument between these two values forms one of the central strands of this study.

Whiggish indifference to the history of the Empire, and Radical critiques of the threat posed by empire to the very fabric of English liberty, might have rendered 'the story of British expansion overseas . . . the real tory alternative to the organization of English history on the basis of the growth of liberty', as Herbert Butterfield thought in 1944. Butterfield argued that 'the shock of 1940' had shown that the Whig history of liberty and the Tory history of Empire were inseparable;[38] what he could not foresee in 1944 was that the war itself would become a major solvent of the Empire. Decolonisation rapidly rendered implausible any attempt retrospectively to write the history of the British Empire as the history of liberty: Winston Churchill's *History of the English-Speaking Peoples* (1956–58), which he had first conceived in the mid-1930s, and Arthur Bryant's even more belated *History of Britain and the British Peoples* (1984–90), remained the monuments to hopes of effecting such an historiographical reconciliation.[39] The futility of this Tory rapprochement was accompanied by the silence of the heirs of Whig history. Historians on the Left were suspicious of the benign claims made on behalf of the British Empire by paternalists, yet were also embarrassed by the part played by the Empire in creating a conservative strain of patriotism.[40] Accordingly, they perpetuated the separation of domestic and Imperial history by overlooking the Empire almost entirely, as the works of Christopher Hill, E. P. Thompson and Lawrence Stone, for

[36] Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, 150.

[37] Compare Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago, 1999), 4–8.

[38] Herbert Butterfield, *The Englishman and His History* (Cambridge, 1944), 81–2.

[39] Winston Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, 4 vols. (London, 1956–8); Arthur Bryant, *The History of Britain and the British Peoples*, 3 vols. (London, 1984–90).

[40] Stephen Howe, 'Labour Patriotism, 1939–83', in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity*, I: *History and Politics* (London, 1989), 127–39. Robert Gregg and Madhavi Kale, 'The Empire and Mr Thompson: Making of Indian Princes and English Working Class', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 33, 36 (6–12 September 1997), 2273–88, offers an excellent case-study of such historical amnesia on the historiographical Left.

instance, mutely testify.[41] The history of the Empire – by which is still meant, overwhelmingly, the 'Second' British Empire – has been left to Imperial historians, who have followed their own trajectory from post-Imperial diffidence to a measured confidence in the prospects for their own subfield. Only belatedly have they acknowledged that their purview should also include the history of the metropolis, and hence that 'British imperial history should be firmly rooted in the history of Britain'.[42]

The persistent reluctance of British historians to incorporate the Empire into the history of Britain is symptomatic of a more general indifference towards the Empire detected by those same historians. 'British historians may have some grounds for their neglect of empire', it has been argued, because in the modern period it only intermittently intruded into British politics; the British state itself was little shaped by imperial experiences; there was no single imperial 'project'; rather, 'empire performed a reflexive rather than a transforming role for the British people'.[43] The question of 'Who cared about the colonies?' in the eighteenth century has been answered equally scrupulously: 'A lot of people did, though they were very unevenly distributed geographically and socially and quite diverse in their approach to American questions.' Few benefited directly from colonial patronage; merchants took an abiding interest in the Atlantic trade but they, of course, were concentrated in mercantile centres; lobbying groups on behalf of American interests had little impact upon British politics, while handfuls of Britons visited or corresponded with the colonies, whether as traders, soldiers, sailors or professionals.[44] If the Empire had so little impact upon the

[41] Each found some belated interest in the Empire: Thompson, for familial reasons in Thompson, *'Alien Homage': Edward Thompson and Rabindranath Tagore* (Delhi, 1993), and the others more generally, for example in Christopher Hill, *Liberty Against the Law: Some Seventeenth-Century Controversies* (London, 1996), pt III, 'Imperial Problems', and Lawrence Stone, 'Introduction', in Stone (ed.), *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London, 1994), 1–32. The works of Eric Hobsbawm and V. G. Kiernan are, of course, notable exceptions to this caveat, though neither has been solely concerned with Britain.

[42] P. J. Marshall, *'A Free Though Conquering People': Britain and Asia in the Eighteenth Century*, Inaugural Lecture, King's College London, 5 March 1981 (London, 1981), 2 (quoted); David Fieldhouse, 'Can Humpty-Dumpty Be Put Together Again? Imperial History in the 1980s', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 12 (1984), 9–10, 17; John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880–1960* (Manchester, 1984); MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1988); A. G. Hopkins, *The Future of the Imperial Past*, Inaugural Lecture, 12 March 1997 (Cambridge, 1997), 8–9.

[43] P. J. Marshall, 'Imperial Britain', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 23 (1995), 380, 382, 386, 392.

[44] Jacob M. Price, 'Who Cared About the Colonies? The Impact of the Thirteen Colonies on British Society and Politics, circa 1714–1775', in Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (eds.), *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill, 1991), 395–436.

historical experience of metropolitan Britons, why would it be necessary to integrate the history of the Empire with the history of the metropolis?

This division between domestic history and extraterritorial history was not unique to the history of Britain. The rise of nationalist historiography in the nineteenth century had placed the history of the nation-state at the centre of European historical enquiry, and distinguished the state from the territorial empires that had preceded it, and in turn from the extra-European empires strung across the globe. The classic nation-state united popular sovereignty, territorial integrity and ethnic homogeneity into a single definition; it therefore stood as the opposite of empire, in so far as that was defined as a hierarchical structure of domination, encompassing diverse territories and ethnically diverse populations. The nation-state as it had been precipitated out of a system of aggressively competing nations nonetheless functioned as 'the empire *manqué* ', which always aimed at conquest and expansion within Europe, but which often had to seek its territorial destiny in the world beyond Europe.[45] 'Nowadays', as Max Weber put it, 'we have to say that a state is that human community which (successfully) lays claim to the *monopoly of legitimate physical violence* within a certain territory, this "territory" being another of the defining characteristics of the state.'[46] That association of the state with territoriality – and hence, implicitly, with contiguity – deliberately dissociated integral, legally bounded states from the less well-demarcated empires, which could be defined either formally or informally, which were separated by sometimes vast oceanic distances from their metropoles, and within which legimitacy was incomplete and physical violence more unevenly distributed.

The distinction between the 'internal' histories of (mostly) European states and the 'external' histories of (exclusively) European empires obscured the fact that those European states had themselves been created by processes of 'conquest, colonization and cultural change' in the Middle Ages.[47] Outside the conventional heartland of Europe, the westward expansion both of medieval Russia and of the nineteenth-century United States, for example, proceeded by many of the same

[45] Istvan Hont, 'The Permanent Crisis of a Divided Mankind: "Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State" in Historical Perspective', *Political Studies*, 42 (1994), 172–3; V. G. Kiernan, 'State and Nation in Western Europe', *Past and Present*, 31 (July 1965), 35.

[46] Max Weber, 'The Profession and Vocation of Politics' (1919), in *Weber: Political Writings*, ed. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge, 1994), 310–11.

[47] Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950–1350* (New Haven, 1993).

methods, yet the history of territorial 'extension' has been rigorously distinguished from the history of maritime 'expansion': 'sea space is supposed to constitute the difference between the former, which is part of the national question, and the colonial question as such'.[48] This would be true of the histories of Portugal, the Dutch Republic, France and even Sweden, the bulk of whose empire lay close to home, around the shores of the Baltic Sea.[49] Sea-space lay between Aragon and Naples, between Castile and the Spanish Netherlands, and between Britain and Ireland. The sea could be a bridge or a barrier, whether within states, or between European states and their possessions *outre-mer*.

The distinction between states and empires has rarely been a clear one, least of all in the early-modern period. As Fernand Braudel observed of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, 'a formidable newcomer confronted the mere territorial or nation-state': the new composite monarchies of early-modern Europe, 'what by a convenient though anachronistic term one could call empires in the modern sense – for how else is one to describe these giants?'[50] In this context, it is notable that those European countries that accumulated the earliest overseas empires were also those that earliest consolidated their states; conversely, those weaker states that had not attempted extensive colonisation outside Europe – most obviously, Germany and Italy – only pursued imperial designs after they had acquired the marks of statehood in the later nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. Empires gave birth to states, and states stood at the heart of empires. Accordingly, the most precocious nation-states of early-modern Europe were the great empire-states: the Spanish Monarchy, Portugal, the Dutch Republic, France and England (later, Britain).

The United Kingdom of Great Britain (and, after 1801, Ireland) would become the most powerful among the composite states of Europe, and would command the greatest of all the European overseas empires. However – perhaps because of this conspicuous success in both state-formation and empire-building – the disjuncture between British history and the history of the British Empire has been peculiarly abrupt and enduring. Even when the Empire has been construed more widely than just the Thirteen Colonies, and its potential sphere of influence broadened to encompass cultural, as well as political and economic,

[48] Marc Ferro, *Colonization: A Global History*, trans. K. D. Prithipaul (London, 1997), 2.

[49] Michael Roberts, *The Swedish Imperial Experience, 1560–1718* (Cambridge, 1979), 16–18, 83–6, though see also C. A. Weslager, *New Sweden on the Delaware 1638–1655* (Wilmington, Del., 1988).

[50] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 2 vols. (London, 1973), II, 659.

concerns, even the most modest assessment of who cared concludes in a paradox. Though empire 'was all-pervasive' – as the far-fetched paraphernalia on every tea-table in Britain could demonstrate by the late eighteenth century – it 'often went strangely unacknowledged – even by those who benefited from it most'. In Britain, as in Italy, Germany or France, for much of the time 'empire simply did not loom all that large in the minds of most men and women back in Europe'.[51] Such a paradox may make it easier to incorporate the fruits of empire into social history,[52] but it still encourages the belief that the Empire took place in a world elsewhere, beyond the domestic horizons of Britons, and hence outside the confines of British history.

Imperial amnesia has of course been diagnosed before. 'We seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind', J. R. Seeley told his Cambridge audience in 1881. 'While we were doing it, that is in the eighteenth century, we did not allow it to affect our imaginations or in any degree to change our ways of thinking.'[53] Seeley hoped to provoke in his audience the realisation that they were, and long had been, inhabitants not of little England but rather of a 'Greater Britain' that encompassed the colonies of white settlement in North America, the Caribbean, the Cape Colony and Australasia, all bound together into an 'ethnological unity' by the common ties of 'race', religion and 'interest'. Yet his aims were also more specifically historiographical, as he partook in the first stirrings of the reaction against insular Whig constitutionalism which would culminate in Butterfield's *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931) half a century later. The grounds for Seeley's attack were not, like those of later Whig revisionists, anti-teleological, for he wished to substitute the expansion of the Empire for the growth of the constitution as the backbone of 'English' history since the eighteenth century. Just as he wished to recall his Cambridge audience to their responsibilities as members of a global community, so he wanted to remind fellow-historians, who were transfixed by 'mere parliamentary wrangle and the agitations about liberty', that in the eighteenth century 'the history of England is not in England but in America and Asia'.[54]

[51] Linda Colley, 'The Imperial Embrace', *Yale Review*, 81, 4 (1993), 92, 98–9.

[52] James Walvin, *Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1660–1800* (Basingstoke, 1997); Philip Lawson, *A Taste for Empire and Glory: Studies in British Overseas Expansion, 1660–1800* (Aldershot, 1997), chs. xiv–xv.

[53] J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (London, 1883), 8.

[54] Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, 10, 50, 9; P. B. M. Blaas, *Continuity and Anachronism: Parliamentary and Constitutional Development in Whig Historiography and in the Anti-Whig Reaction between 1890 and 1930* (The Hague, 1978), 36–40.

Seeley's *Expansion of England* became one of the best-sellers of late Victorian Britain, and remained in print until 1956, the year of the Suez crisis. Its very popularity ensured that its effects would be widespread and enduring, even if they were not necessarily those sought by Seeley himself. The work certainly failed in its positive agendas. The Imperial Federation movement of the 1880s, to which the lectures gave succour, did not achieve its aim of bringing institutional union to the 'ethnological' entity he had described. Nor did the writing of domestic history become any more noticeably hospitable to the matter of Greater Britain, despite the brief vogue enjoyed by the term.[55] Seeley himself retreated from the imperial perspective he had encouraged in *The Expansion of England*. His next major work, *The Growth of British Policy* (1895), despite its title, chronicled the diplomatic history of England alone from 1588 to 1713, but in this work the only empire in that period was the Holy Roman Empire. It thereby confirmed the assumption of his earlier book that England's expansion to become a global 'Commercial State' was the creation of the eighteenth century: hence the British Empire, in its classic and enduring form, had not encompassed the Atlantic empire of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[56]

Instead of promoting a new imperial synthesis among British historians, Seeley's work inspired the creation of the new and separate subfield of Imperial history.[57] This created a novel area of historical inquiry, but it institutionalised the very separation between British history and Imperial history that Seeley had deplored; it also identified Imperial history almost exclusively as the history of the 'Second' British Empire. Though Seeley had reserved particular scorn for those historians of eighteenth-century Britain who had failed to recognise the true direction of British history in that century, and who overlooked the Empire at the expense of the Whiggish history of liberty, even in *The Expansion of England* the eighteenth century was important only as a prelude to the Imperial grandeur of the nineteenth. It marked the prologue to the Second British Empire, while the American Revolution

[55] C. W. Dilke, *Greater Britain: A Record of Travel in the English-Speaking Countries during 1866 and '67*, 3 vols. (London, 1868); E. A. Freeman, *Greater Greece and Greater Britain; and, George Washington, The Expander of England* (London, 1886); Dilke, *Problems of Greater Britain* (London, 1890); David Armitage, 'Greater Britain: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?', *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999), 427–45.

[56] J. R. Seeley, *The Growth of British Policy*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1895), II, 349–81.

[57] Peter Burroughs, 'John Robert Seeley and British Imperial History', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 1 (1972), 191–211; J. G. Greenlee, 'A "Succession of Seeleys": The "Old School" Re-examined', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 4 (1976), 266–82.

('an event', Seeley thought, '. . . on an altogether higher level of importance than almost any other in modern English history') was the regrettable but instructive entr'acte between two largely distinct empires.[58]

Seeley elsewhere remarked on the fragility of the First Empire, and its failure to produce the kind of organic community united by strong ties of nationality, religion and interest that he believed characterised Greater Britain in the nineteenth century: 'We had seen on the other side of the Atlantic only tobacco and fisheries and sugar, not English communities', a 'materialist' (or mercantilist) empire created for the benefit of the metropolis, but thereby doomed to dissolution as '[t]he fabric of materialism crumbled away'.[59] Some among Seeley's contemporaries disagreed strongly with that verdict, most notably the man soon to be his counterpart as Regius Professor at Oxford, E. A. Freeman, an opponent of the Imperial Federation movement but a proponent of an expansive community of the Anglo-Saxon and anglophone peoples, including the United States, rather than the narrower Imperial community of Greater Britain.[60] Freeman effectively forgave the Americans for their Revolution and pronounced them to be brethren sprung from the same Anglo-Saxon stock, speakers of the same language, and inheritors of the same patrimony of freedom as the English. His proselytising Anglo-Saxonism, spread on a lecture-tour of the eastern United States in 1881–82 just as Seeley was delivering his lectures in Cambridge, had an equal but opposite effect: as Seeley planted the seeds for Imperial History, so Freeman helped to prepare the ground for the 'Imperial School' of early – or colonial – American history.[61] However, the different premises on which the two syntheses rested, their almost entirely exclusive chronologies, and their competing orientations – one eastward, the other, westward from Britain – effectively confirmed the divorce between the histories of the First and Second British Empires for much of the following century.

For Seeley, 'history has to do with the State', just as the study of history should be a 'school of statesmanship' for its practitioners and

[58] Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, 147.

[59] Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, 147; Seeley, 'Introduction', in A. J. R. Trendell, *The Colonial Year Book for the Year 1890* (London, 1890), xx.

[60] E. A. Freeman, 'Imperial Federation' (1885), in Freeman, *Greater Greece and Greater Britain*, 104–43. For an instructive comparison of Seeley and Freeman, see Stefan Collini, Donald Winch and John Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge, 1983), 219–34.

[61] E. A. Freeman, *Lectures to American Audiences* (Philadelphia, 1882); Freeman, *Greater Greece and Greater Britain*, 38–48; Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, 1988), 80–4.

their pupils.[62] The state in his sense was defined functionally, by its monopoly of force and its duty to uphold justice and defend its inhabitants; more importantly, it was constituted as a community ethnically, religiously and by commonality of interest. On these grounds, Seeley argued, Greater Britain had as much of a claim to be called a state as 'England' itself: both were organic communities, united by common interests, and not merely 'composed of voluntary shareholders' or formed by force into 'inorganic quasi-state[s]'. The British Empire was therefore not an empire in the ordinary sense at all, since it was not held together by force (India of course excluded); it was simply 'an enlargement of the English State'. Yet, if the British Empire was in fact the 'English' state writ large, many of the nation-states of Europe were in fact empires in minuscule, since they had come into being by incorporating diverse peoples and scattered territories by conquest, annexation and force. Indeed, in so far as most modern states contained huge expanses of territory, and were inevitably divided by region and locality, they all exhibited the kind of federal 'double-government', in the centre and at the localities, that was a feature of imperial governance. In this sense, all contemporary states – the United States, with its individual states; England, with its counties; France, with its *départements* – were to a greater or lesser degree federal and composite. In their structures of governance, they approximated modern empires far more than they did classical city-states; similarly, modern empires like 'Greater Britain' could be called states, if states were defined by the 'ethnological' unity they displayed.[63]

Seeley's attention to the common features of state and empire led him to consider as convergent and similar processes which later historians have tended to treat as parallel or distinct. States had once had the characteristics of empires; empires were now the enlarged versions of states. State-building and empire-formation did not have to be treated as if one were a centrifugal process, drawing everything inwards to a governmental centre, and the other centripetal, extending metropolitan governance into new territories and over new peoples. Seeley's conflation of state and empire of course had its limitations. The greatest of these was the necessary omission of India from the community of Greater Britain. This masked the fact that the British Empire in South

[62] Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, 6; Seeley, 'The Teaching of Politics' (1870), in Seeley, *Lectures and Essays* (London, 1870), 296.

[63] Seeley, *Introduction to Political Science: Two Series of Lectures* (London, 1896), 35, 68, 70, 92–4; Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, 43, 50.

Asia was precisely the kind of 'inorganic quasi-state' Seeley deplored in his *Introduction to Political Science* (1896).[64] Nonetheless, it enabled him to see continuities between the First and Second British Empires that other historians had overlooked; more fruitfully, it allowed him to discern a relationship between state-formation and empire-building that historians have yet to investigate comprehensively.

Seeley argued that two movements defined the history of Britain after 1603: 'the internal union of the three kingdoms', and 'the creation of a still larger Britain comprehending vast possessions beyond the sea'.[65] The recent construction of a 'New British History' by historians of England, Scotland and Ireland has made it possible to perceive connections between these two processes that were invisible to Seeley, who remained more concerned with the expansion of 'England' than with the creation of Britain. This 'New British History' has taken its inspiration from J. G. A. Pocock's exhortations that the contraction of Greater Britain should be the reason to rewrite the history of Britain in its widest sense.[66] Pocock initially called for a 'new subject' of British history in New Zealand in 1973, just after Britain's decision to enter the European Economic Community, and with it, the Common Agricultural Policy, which had potentially devastating consequences for economies like New Zealand's, which had for over a century been the beneficiaries of imperial preferences.[67] This 'New British History' would not simply treat the histories of the Three Kingdoms and four nations that had variously interacted within 'the Atlantic Archipelago' of Britain, Ireland and their attendant islands and continental neighbours. Those histories would be central to its agenda, but Pocock's inclusion of British America before 1783, and British North America (later, Canada) thereafter, as well as the histories of Australia and New Zealand (and, presumably, of other white settler communities of primarily British descent), 'obliges us to conceive of "British history" no longer as an archipelagic or even an Atlantic-American phenomenon, but as having occurred on a planetary scale'.[68] Pocock therefore offered a vision of Greater Britain in light of the contraction of 'England' rather than its expansion, and from the

[64] Freeman, *Greater Greece and Greater Britain*, 41–2; Deborah Wormell, *Sir John Seeley and the Uses of History* (Cambridge, 1980), 142.

[65] Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, 9–10.

[66] J. G. A. Pocock, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject', *New Zealand Historical Journal*, 8 (1974), 3–21, rptd in *Journal of Modern History*, 4 (1975), 601–24; Pocock, 'The Limits and Divisions of British History'.

[67] J. G. A. Pocock, 'History and Sovereignty: The Historiographical Response to Europeanization in Two British Cultures', *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (1991), 361–4, 380–9.

[68] Pocock, 'The Limits and Divisions of British History', 317–19.

vantage point of a former imperial province rather than from that of the metropole. The post-Imperial anxiety behind Pocock's historiographical agenda is as obvious as the high-Imperial confidence behind Seeley's. These equal yet opposite motives nonetheless produce the same historiographical conclusion: that it is essential to integrate the history of state and empire if British history, not least in the early modern period, is to be properly understood.

The New British History has concentrated on the 'British problem', the recurrent puzzle faced especially by the political elites of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland of how to integrate four (or more nations) into three (or, at times, fewer) kingdoms, or to resist absorption or conquest by one or other of the competing states within Britain and Ireland. It has become clear that some points in the histories of Britain and Ireland were more 'British' than others. During these moments, the problem of Britain – whether within Anglo-Scottish, Anglo-Irish, Hiberno-Scottish or pan-archipelagic relations – came to the forefront of political debate, and profoundly affected the interrelations between the Three Kingdoms. These were all stages in a process of state-formation construed teleologically as the history of political union within the 'British Isles', from the Statute of Wales (1536), via the Irish Kingship Act (1541), the attempted dynastic union between England and Scotland under Henry VIII and Edward VI (1542, 1548–49), to the personal union of England and Scotland under James VI and I and Charles I (1603–49), the creation of a British Commonwealth (1651–60), the Stuart Restoration, the Glorious Revolution and the Williamite Wars in Ireland (1688–91), the Anglo-Scottish Union (1707) and on to the Union of Great Britain and Ireland (1801–1922).

Concentration on the history of the British state has reproduced many of the features of the whiggish histories of the Three Kingdoms that preceded it. Above all, it has perpetuated the separation between the history of Britain and the history of the British Empire. For all of its avowed intentions to supersede the national historiographies of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, the New British History has not encompassed the settlements, provinces and dependencies of Greater Britain, whether in the nineteenth century or, especially, earlier.[69]

[69] Almost none of the major collections of essays on the New British History covers any British territories, populations, or influences outside Britain and Ireland: Ronald Asch (ed.), *Three Nations – A Common History? England, Scotland, Ireland and British History c. 1600–1920* (Bochum, 1993); Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London, 1995); Steven G. Ellis and Sarah Barber (eds.), *Conquest and Union: Fashioning a British State 1485–1725* (London, 1995); Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill (eds.), *The British Problem:*

Meanwhile, the history of the British Empire has remained in the hands of Imperial historians. As a result, neither Seeley's suggestive juxtaposition of the creation of the 'English' state and the expansion of 'England', nor Pocock's more comprehensive agenda for British history written on a global scale, has yet been pursued to its logical conclusion by treating the histories of Britain and Ireland and of the British Empire as necessarily conjoined rather than inevitably distinct.

The adoption of early-modern European models of state-formation by practitioners of the New British History has had the effect of further separating metropolitan from Imperial history. These historians have rediscovered what J. R. Seeley realised a century ago: that England, like France, was a composite monarchy, just as Britain, like the Spanish Monarchy, was a multiple kingdom.[70] In the former, a diversity of territories, peoples, institutions and legal jurisdictions is cemented under a single, recognised sovereign authority; in the latter, various kingdoms were ruled by a single sovereign, while they maintained varying degrees of autonomy. 'All multiple kingdoms are composite monarchies, but not all composite monarchies are multiple kingdoms', as Conrad Russell has put it.[71] The various moments in the British – or British-and-Irish – problem registered the tensions between these two predecessors of the classically defined nation-state, but in doing so they also exemplified pan-European processes whose consequences were felt in Burgundy, Béarn, the Spanish Netherlands, Catalonia, Naples, the Pyrenees, Bohemia and elsewhere during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The divisive consequences of these processes were sharpened when one partner in a composite state successfully attempted overseas expansion: 'imperialism and composite monarchy made uncomfortable bedfellows'.[72] Yet this assertion that 'imperialism' was somehow distinct from state-formation, rather than continuous with it, further entrenches the

State-Formation in the Atlantic Archipelago c. 1534–1707 (Basingstoke, 1996); Laurence Brockliss and David Eastwood (eds.), *A Union of Multiple Identities: The British Isles c. 1750–c. 1850* (Manchester, 1997); Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts (eds.), *British Consciousness and Identity: The Making of Britain, 1533–1707* (Cambridge, 1998); S. J. Connolly (ed.), *United Kingdoms? Ireland and Great Britain from 1500 – Integration and Diversity* (Dublin, 1998); Glenn Burgess (ed.), *The New British History: Founding a Modern State, 1603–1715* (London, 1999). Tony Claydon and Ian McBride (eds.), *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650–c. 1850* (Cambridge, 1998), is the sole exception.

[70] H. G. Koenigsberger, '*Dominium Regale* or *Dominium Politicum et Regale*: Monarchies and Parliaments in Early Modern Europe', in Koenigsberger, *Politicians and Virtuosi: Essays in Early Modern History* (London, 1986), 1–25.

[71] Conrad Russell, 'Composite Monarchies in Early Modern Europe: The British and Irish Example', in Grant and Stringer (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom?*, 133.

[72] J. H. Elliott, 'A Europe of Composite Monarchies', *Past and Present*, 137 (Nov. 1992), 59–60.

assumption that states – even composite states – and empires – even largely intra-European empires, like Sweden's – belong to different areas of historical inquiry because they were distinguishable, even competing, historical processes.

The model of composite monarchy offers fruitful analogies with the history of the European empires. Monarchies were compounded by the same means that empires were acquired: by conquest, annexation, inheritance and secession. The rulers of composite monarchies faced problems that would be familiar to the administrators of any empire: the need to govern distant dependencies from a powerful centre; collisions between metropolitan and provincial legislatures; the necessity of imposing common norms of law and culture over diverse and often resistant populations; and the consequent reliance of the central government on the co-optation of local elites.[73] It is important not to overstate the similarities: after all, the extra-European empires were often acquired and governed without any recognition of the political standing of their inhabitants; composite monarchies and multiple kingdoms tended to have a bias towards uniformity rather than an acceptance of diversity; and the provinces of composite monarchies were not usually treated both as economic and as political dependencies. However, it is equally important not to underestimate the continuities between the creation of composite states and the formation of the European overseas empires. As the succeeding chapters of this study will show, ideology provided just such a link between the processes of empire-building and state-formation in the early-modern period.

[73] H. G. Koenigsberger, 'Composite States, Representative Institutions and the American Revolution', *Historical Research*, 62 (1989), 135–54; Michael J. Braddick, 'The English Government, War, Trade, and Settlement, 1625–1688', in Nicholas Canny (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, I: *The Origins of Empire* (Oxford, 1998), 286–308.