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**Seeing the global agency of those who 'stood still':
Economic borders and the formation of the UK Union**

“In its innermost kernel, mercantilism is nothing but state-making.... The essence of the system lies not in some doctrine of money, or of the balance of trade; not in tariff barriers, protective duties, or navigation laws; but in something far greater: namely in the total transformation of society and its organisation, as well as of the state and its institutions, in the replacing of a local and territorial economic policy by that of the national state”

G. Schmoller, *The Mercantile System and Its Historical Significance* (translated from Studien über die wirtschaftliche Politik Friedrichs des Grossen, 1884), N.Y., 1931, p. 43.

Any effort to study the formation of the UK Union today must eventually confront the fact that across the last thirty years, historians have demonstrated time and time again the interconnectedness of the early modern world, and the dangers of adopting an exclusively ‘national’ approach. The shape of this oft-described ‘global turn’, which spans economic, social, and cultural history, is now deeply familiar – particularly those of us who have only recently been through postgraduate study – and I will not describe it in detail here. What is relevant is that increasingly, political historians of Britain have sought to reflect this transformation of our understanding by emphasising the imperial nature of the early British state. Much of this stems from the work of David Armitage, whose *Ideological Origins of the British Empire* emphasised the role of the Atlantic world and the management of empire in elite political economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In Armitage’s analysis of the Union of 1707, for example, he explores the challenge posed by an independent Scottish system of political economy in terms of the Darien Company as a vision of empire.¹ Similarly, Ted McCormack has explored the work of William Petty and the rise of populationism, while Abigail Swingen has considered the relationship between late seventeenth-century theoretical understandings of labour and slavery.² Philip Stern has focused on how the East India Company shaped and was shaped by the political economy of the English state.³ More recently, Gabriel Glickman has emphasised the influence of colonial designs and colonial peoples on seventeenth century English political and religious history.⁴ As I have discussed elsewhere, one impact of such studies has been to explore in detail the agency of

¹ D. Armitage, ‘The Scottish vision of empire: the intellectual origins of the Darien venture’, in J. Robertson ed., *A Union of Empire, political thought and the British union of 1707* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 113; see also D. Armitage, *Ideological origins of the British Empire*, (Cambridge, 2004).

² T. McCormack, *William Petty and the Ambitions of Political Arithmetic*, (Oxford, 2009); A. Swingen ‘Labour’ in P. J. Stern and C. Wennerlind eds., *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire*, (Oxford 2013).

³ P. J. Stern, *The company state: corporate sovereignty and the early modern foundation of the British Empire in India*, (Oxford, 2011)

⁴ G. Glickman, *Making the Imperial Nation; Colonization, Politics, and English Identity, 1660-1700*, (New Haven, C.T., 2023).

a relatively small group of merchants and administrators.⁵ In this context, and inspired by the old concept of the fiscal-military state to which I will return in a moment, borders become aspects of imperial state-formation, imposed from above to generate revenue and manage the distinction between the metropole and its extractive colonial possessions.

All of these works have succeeded in emphasising the importance of Empire to the formation of Britain as a nation. However, by focusing in an English context on an extremely small number of elites, they also raise a simple question. In this global imperial world, what was the role of the English, Scottish and Irish people who were not part of the elite institutions that managed empire, and did not traverse great oceans or cross emerging borders? Did they have any agency at all in relations between the Three Kingdoms, and is there a way of understanding the political history of this period that grounds the emerging British state simultaneously in its global, imperial context and that of the immediate society it inhabited?

When attempting to suggest answers to these questions, it is worth beginning with the movement to 'bring the state back in', a phrase taken from the 1985 volume edited by Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol.⁶ Such scholars sought to build on then-recent developments in social history and sociology, while reintroducing the role of state. The movement was heavily influenced by both Keynesian economics and the success of the East Asian economies after the Second World War in pursuing a model of economic development dependent on state action, although different scholars took different approaches.⁷ As Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Peter B. Evans put it in the opening sentence of their contribution to *Bringing the state back in*, 'Effective state intervention is now assumed to be an integral part of successful capitalist development', though they argue, building on the much older work of Karl Polanyi, that the most important aspect for historians to consider is how states can meet the challenge, since they are not automatically capable of doing so.⁸ The same volume featured chapters from Ira Katznelson, who described the role of the state in differences between English and American class formation, and whose later work argues for the importance of understanding international factors in the development of American political economy,

⁵ H. Bromley, 'England's Mercantilism; trading companies, employment, and the politics of trade in global history', *English Historical Review*, forthcoming, 2023.

⁶ C. Tilly, 'Warmaking and the State as organised crime' in P. B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, T. Skocpol eds., *Bringing the State Back In*, (Cambridge, 1985).

⁷ D. Rueschemeyer and P. B. Evans, 'The State and Economic Transformation: Toward an Analysis of the Conditions Underlying Effective Intervention' in Evans, Rueschemeyer, Skocpol eds., *Bringing the State Back In*; In Japan in particular, there was a clear intellectual relationship between their model of development and the old German Historical School, with its concept of Mercantilism as central to state formation. See E. Grimmer-Solem. "German Social Science, Meiji Conservatism, and the Peculiarities of Japanese History." *Journal of World History* 16(2), 2005, pp.187-222; Y. Hionoya, "Lujo Brentano, Alfred Marshall, and Tokuzo Fukuda; the reception and transformation of the German Historical School in Japan" In *The German Historical School*, (London, 2000), pp.167-84.

⁸ D. Rueschemeyer and P. B. Evans, 'The State and Economic Transformation: Toward an Analysis of the Conditions Underlying Effective Intervention' in Evans, Rueschemeyer, Skocpol eds., *Bringing the State Back In*; Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York, 1944); A. Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, 1962). In Japan in particular, there was a clear intellectual relationship between their model of development and the old German Historical School. See E. Grimmer-Solem. "German Social Science, Meiji Conservatism, and the Peculiarities of Japanese History." *Journal of World History* 16(2), 2005, pp.187-222; Y. Hionoya, "Lujo Brentano, Alfred Marshall, and Tokuzo Fukuda; the reception and transformation of the German Historical School in Japan" In *The German Historical School*, (London, 2000), pp.167-84.

and Charles Tilly.⁹ Tilly's work on warfare and state formation is particularly relevant in this context as it was one of the inspirations, alongside the wider *bringing the state back in* movement, for John Brewer's *Sinews of Power*, which first outlined the now well-known thesis of the fiscal-military state: that the need to service debt raised to fund overseas conflict drove the development of excise bureaucracy and ultimately the British state. What is less well remembered is that Brewer dedicates the last section of the book to the lobbying campaigns of different local economic interests, taking the campaign by leather manufacturers against higher duties as his example. The tension the fiscal-military state created within a society that simultaneously sought to curtail and exploit it, Brewer concluded, 'lies at the heart of eighteenth-century British history'.¹⁰

Brewer himself has recently acknowledged that the lack of global and imperial context is a weakness of *Sinews of Power*.¹¹ Its strength, however, is that it captures two transformations in the English state that were fundamental to relations between the Three Kingdoms, and the formation of the British state in general. The first was entry into the Nine Years War, itself of existential importance to the new constitutional settlement, which brought with it broad support among political elites for increasing revenue, including customs duties imposed at the border. The second was that although 1688 created no 'new' institutions, the new settlement heralded a major change in the tenor and nature of political decision-making, by giving Parliament sole authority over taxation and regulation, and oversight over expenditure. Petitions that might once have been sent to the sovereign were directed to Parliament, and the networks of knowledge exchange that linked Members of Parliament with their constituencies were strengthened by regular campaigning. Furthermore, although democratic processes were clearly weak, the number of competitive seats was relatively high.¹² MPs understood the economy through the constant exchange of subjective knowledge, from pamphlets and parliamentary petitions to private correspondence, riots, protests, clubs and lobbying organisations, which came together in London to form what I have described elsewhere as the 'open archive' on which state decision-making was based.¹³ As a result, state decision-making processes were relatively easy for networks of English manufacturers, merchants, and landowners to access.

To these three, interrelated factors - increasing global and imperial interactions, geopolitical conflict, and institutional change - we must add a fourth, which has been emphasised time and time again by economic historians since at least the 1930s: the increasing importance of the market and waged work in English society.¹⁴ Developing patterns of outwork, the longstanding trend towards enclosure and

⁹ Katznelson, 'working class formation and the state', Tilly, 'the state as organised crime; in Evans, Rueschemeyer, Skocpol eds., *Bringing the State Back In*; Katznelson and Shefter eds., *Shaped by War and Trade*.

¹⁰ J. Brewer, *Sinews of Power*, p.233. The importance of the relationship between Parliament and lobbying interests was further explored in L. Davison, ed., *Stilling the grumbling hive: the response to social and economic problems in England, 1689-1750*, (Stroud, 1992).

¹¹ J. Brewer, 'Revisiting the Sinews of Power', in A. Graham and P. Walsh, eds., *The British Fiscal Military States, 1660-c.1783*, (London, 2016).

¹² For the shift in petitioning, see M. Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation*, chapters 2-3; J. Hoppit, *Britain's political economies*. For the potential impact of electoral competitiveness, see M. E. Newell, 'Putting the "Political" back in Political Economy'.

¹³ Bromley, 'England's Mercantilism'.

¹⁴ There are more works on this topic than it is possible to cite, but the origins lie in many of the early historians of the industrial revolution, as well as of women's work: E. Lipson, *The Economic History of England*, (London, 1956); E. Lipson, *A short history of wool and its manufacture*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1953); J. de Lacy Mann and A. P. Wadsworth, *The Cotton Trade and Industrial Lancashire*, (Manchester, 1931); I. Pinchbeck,

increased agricultural efficiency, and new opportunities for popular consumption led to an ever-greater dependence on manufacturing to sustain communities. The scale of this dependence has been suggested by recent work on the scale of textile manufacturing conducted by the Cambridge Group for Population and Social Structure. Their work suggests that at its height in 1700, one in ten men in England (10.7%) was employed in textile manufacturing alone, and, although this is extremely approximate, something like one in four English women.¹⁵ Numbers in the key producing regions of the Western England, East Anglia and Yorkshire was even larger, because the rapid increase in the population of London in this period meant that the role of textile manufacturing in the counties surrounding the capital actually decreased, as these areas moved towards agricultural production for London markets.¹⁶ The figures used in Shaw Taylor, Sebastian Keibek and Keith Sugden's working paper on employment on the changing locations of woollen manufacture place the share of the labour force employed in the textile industry in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Somerset at one man in five.¹⁷ Craig Muldrew, working backwards from contemporary estimates and export figures, comes to a rough figure of 495,974 women and children employed in spinning alone in 1700, roughly 10% of the total population of England at the time.¹⁸ This huge weight of employment was sustained by a combination of domestic consumption and, vitally, exports to mainland Europe, which at this point dwarfed those to America.

By focusing on the processes by which legislation was passed, we can bring these separate factors together to see the role of manufacturers, and the people they employed, in the global and imperial processes that gave rise to the British state. Doing so reveals the value of Brewer's now 24-year-old challenge to see the tension between society and the emerging state at the heart of eighteenth-century history. It also reveals how that tension manifested itself primarily in an effort to manipulate and exploit the fundamental building block of the modern nation state: the border. In my current book project, I focus on the role of textile manufacturers and global markets in British state formation. My intention here therefore is to dwell briefly on a few sources and arguments from the chapter of the book on the Union that suggest how manufacturers and manufacturing communities came together to shape the formation of the UK Union.

Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, (London, 1977); A. Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, (London, 1968). The rise of outwork later became caught up in first the concept of 'proto-industrialisation', then Jan De Vries' concept of the 'industrious revolution'. See D.C. Coleman, 'Proto-industrialisation, a concept too many' *Economic History Review*, vol.36(3), (1983); . De Vries, *The Industrious Revolution : Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2008).

¹⁵ S. Keibek, *The male occupational structure of England and Wales, 1600-1850*, (Unpublished PhD thesis, 2016), p.152. See also S. Keibek, "Correcting the Probate Inventory Record for Wealth Bias" Working Paper, Cambridge Working Papers in Economic and Social History; S. A. Keibek, and L. Shaw-Taylor. "Early Modern Rural By-employments: A Re-examination of the Probate Inventory Evidence." *Agricultural History Review*, vol.61(2), (2013), pp.244-81.

¹⁶ F. J. Fisher, *London and the English economy, 1500-1700*, (London, 1990), p. 196; For London's population increase, see E. A. Wrigley, 'A Simple model for London's importance in the changing English economy', *Past & Present*, vol.37(1), 1967, pp.44-5, 55.

¹⁷ K. Sugden, S. Keibek, and L. Shaw-Taylor, 'Adam Smith revisited: coal and the location of the woollen manufacture in England before mechanization, c. 1500-1820', Cambridge Working Papers in Economic and Social History, 2018.

¹⁸ Given that productivity and hours worked would have varied considerably, the total number is likely to have been significantly higher. C. Muldrew, 'The ancient Distaff and Whirling Spindle', p.518; for population figures Wrigley et.al. *English Population History from Family Reconstitution 1580-1837*, (Cambridge 1997)

The English manufacturers of all sizes who managed vast networks of outwork sought to use the expanding state to create a coherent national market, structured to manipulate overseas trade to their advantage in the name of widespread employment. Beyond beneficial customs duties, they sought to achieve this by banning the export of English wool – an idea that in fact dated back to Restoration times but had been poorly enforced. In the period between 1689 and 1714 a further twenty-six bills were proposed for making the ban ‘more effectual’, of which six passed.¹⁹ However, one of the primary producers of wool for English manufacturing, particularly in the south west, was Ireland – then under its own Parliament, which was taking active steps to encourage its own rival woollen manufacturing industry. Scotland, meanwhile, was not a significant source of wool, but rather ran its own extremely profitable trade exporting wool to mainland Europe. English wool could therefore be smuggled across the border to Scotland, where upon it in effect changed political economies. Smuggling of English wool into Scotland remained rampant despite constant legislation – including a ban on the movement of wool by night within 15 miles of the border.

To limit the Irish trade, Parliament first passed an act in 1696 banning Irish wool exports anywhere except England – a measure taken pre-emptively to limit demands for Ireland to be banned from exporting finished woollen cloth, which the Whig administration saw as too aggressive.²⁰ Enforcement was helped by a previous act mandating that Irish wool be imported only to a small number of designated English ports, including Liverpool, Bristol and Minehead. The attempt to head off further legislation failed, and first Taunton clothiers, and then merchants in Bideford and Exeter petitioned for a total ban on the export of Irish woollen cloth.²¹ Constant pressure was maintained by a major campaign by Devon clothiers, specifically from Ottery, Barnstaple, Tiverton, Exeter and Crediton, all of whom appear to have written their petitions together.²² They emphasised that close access to wool allowed Irish producers to make serge cheaper, ‘hindering the employing of many thousand poor people here’.²³ The difficulty was that, in the eyes of the Court, the same measures that were fundamental to the ambitions of their political allies in Ireland were precisely those that were being opposed at home.²⁴ The Chief Secretary of Ireland, who was then in fact a clothier’s son, Sir Paul Methuen, therefore opposed the export ban in the Commons, while attempting to craft a compromise around a higher duty, developing an idea that had first been outlined two years earlier by John Locke.²⁵

¹⁹ Hoppit, *Britain’s Political Economies*, p.220.

²⁰ British Library (hereafter BL), Southwell to Montagu, MS 4761.

²¹ Sophus Reinhert, *Translating Empire*. See also J. Cary, *An Essay on the State of England in relation to its Trade, its Poor, & its Taxes, for carrying on the Present War against France*, (Bristol, 1695); HCJ, 23 March 1697.

²² Patrick Kelly, ‘The Irish Woollen Export Prohibition Act of 1699: Kearney re-visited’, pp. 22-44; H. F. Kearney ‘The Political Background to English Mercantilism, 1695-1700’, *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 11(3), (1959), pp. 484-496

²³ House of Commons Journal (hereafter HCJ), 11 January -28 February 1698.

²⁴ The best demonstration of this is the work of John Pollexfen, the Whig member of the Board of Trade, whose commentary on the Irish economy is entirely contradictory. Catholicism, he wrote, had caused ‘the averseness the Natural Irish have generally to Industry’, while also making them rebellious, to the ‘effusion of English blood’. Yet simultaneously, bringing the Irish to be ‘more industrious’ would be a ‘continual prejudice’ to England, and particularly ‘the increase of the Woollen Manufactory in that Kingdom may prove fatal to those of England’. J. Pollexfen, *Discourse of trade and coyn*, (London, 1697), ‘Ireland’.

²⁵ See Kearney, ‘The political background to English mercantilism’, p.487.

Methuen failed, and the full ban was enacted after more petitions and a Tory victory in the elections in Exeter fought on opposition to Irish textile manufacturing.²⁶

The Irish parliament, however, did not give in without a fight, and set off a major constitutional crisis by arguing that the English parliament did not have the authority to legislate over the Irish domestic economy. The history of the dispute reveals the fascinating duality of English political processes in the later Stuart era. The number of key decisionmakers was often small, in this case consisting primarily of the educated circle around John Locke and others at the Board of Trade, yet they operated in a political environment shaped by a Parliament influenced by the earned knowledge of manufacturers. After a number of pamphlets, most importantly one by William Moyneux, argued that the English Parliament did not have the power to regulate the Irish economy, Parliament submitted address to the King on behalf of Parliament asserting English parliament supremacy. The Act stood – and Ireland entered a de facto parliamentary Union with England on key questions of overseas trade. However, the Irish Woollen Act also had wider implications. In the process of its drafting, the Board of Trade had expressed ‘concern’ that the American colonies might develop their own textile manufacturing. The Act therefore forbade the American colonies from ever exporting any kind of woollen cloth, with the addition that they were also prevented from shipping any yarn to Europe, including England, ‘for the further improvement of the manufactures of this Kingdom’.²⁷

In Scotland, the process was different – particularly after the failure of the Darien scheme. The ‘Company for trading with Africa and the Indies’, to give its full name, was originally conceived as a transnational venture to trade with India, combining English ‘interlopers’ opposed to both the old and new East India companies with mainland European investment, particularly from Hamburg. Westminster quickly passed an act preventing English participation in the scheme, and the proposal shifted. When in 1695 the eyes of the company turned to Central America, Westminster continued to frustrate the project, ordering English colonies to refuse all help to the colony. In Hamburg, the English Envoy Sir Paul Rycout was instructed to draft a Royal Address for the Senate of Hamburg, demanding the city’s merchants withdraw from the scheme. The Senate was confused by complied. ‘We look upon it as a very strange thing’, replied the Senate, ‘that the King of Britain should offer to hinder us who are a free people to Trade with whom we please; but are amazed to think that he would hinder us from joyning with his own Subjects in Scotland, to whom he has so lately given such large privileges, by act of Parliament’.²⁸

After Darien failed so spectacularly, and with the question of the Hanoverian succession opening up the theoretical danger of Scotland’s geopolitical separation, the Scottish Parliament began to use the wool trade to punish England. In 1703, according to the parliamentary proceedings, the Scottish Parliament maintained a prohibition on the export of English and Irish wool. Enforcement, however, was almost non-existent.²⁹ The year after, this was turned on its head, with an Act that explicitly

²⁶ Ibid; 10 William, Chapter 16 (in common printed editions, Chapter 11), Roll 2, Parl. 46 in *Statutes of the Realm*, vol, 7, p,524.

²⁷ 10 William, Chapter 16 (in common printed editions, Chapter 11), Roll 2, Parl. 46 in *Statutes of the Realm*, vol, 7, p,528.

²⁸ Anon. and Sir Paul Rycout, *A memorial given in to the Senate of the city of Hamburg*, 1697.

²⁹ *The laws and acts made in the first session of the first Parliament, of our most High and Dread sovereign, Anne, By the Grace of God, Queen of Scotland, England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith. Holden and begun at Edinburgh, the fourth day of July 1703*, 1703.

allowed the export of wool, 'whether the growth of this or any other Kingdom'.³⁰ This explicit challenge to England's political economy came directly after Anne had refused to grant assent to the Act of Security rejecting the Hanoverian succession. The Act of Security, which passed the next year, also demanded free access to England's Atlantic possessions.³¹ Parliament responded with the so-called 'Alien Act', which denied Scots in England the rights of English citizens.³²

In the extensive historiography on the Union of 1707, the role of the textile manufacturing has been neglected, yet pamphlet literature on the Union reveals how Scotland's pursuit of buyers for its raw wool came into conflict with the national system of political economy England's clothiers had done so much to put in place at Westminster.³³ The two dominant economic voices in the Union debate were Edinburgh merchants and some landowners, who saw Scotland's economic future in trade with Europe, particularly in wool, and advocates of Union who looked to domestic manufacturing and trade with the emerging Atlantic world.³⁴ One pamphlet, dealing with the question of 'why some of our most considerable merchants are at present against the Union with England', explained that 'they have got themselves into a course of trade, very beneficial to themselves, though not so for their Country' in the sending of wool and sheepskins to France in return for wine.³⁵ Writing on behalf of Robert Harley, Defoe argued that due to the 'ill-husbandry of the people' the only way Scotland maintained the wool price was by smuggled English wool. Defoe then argued, quite remarkably, that the wool trade was the only basis of Scotland's potential alliance with France, and that without it, Scots would be obliged to enter into French military service to persuade the French state to accept Scottish fish exports.³⁶ The debate over textiles and the union was messy and inconsistent. Some of the most ardent unionist pamphleteers argued that an economic border between England and Scotland would need to be maintained to support Scottish textile manufacturing, while James Hodges, in his argument for maintaining separate Parliaments to protect the rights of Scots, argued that each should have a veto over the other's trade policy.³⁷ All, however, sought to grapple with what Defoe

³⁰ *The laws and acts made in the second session of the first Parliament, of our most High and Dread sovereign, Anne, By the Grace of God, Queen of Scotland, England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith. Holden and begun at Edinburgh, the sixth day of July 1704*, 1704.

³¹ For the political background to the act see M. Lynch, *Scotland, a New History*, (London, 1992).

³² The act also prevented the livestock trade between the two realms. See 3&4 Anne, Chapter VI, Rol. 3.1, Parl. 17, *Statutes of the Realm*, vol.8, p.349.

³³ See Ch. A. Whatley, *The Scots and the Union*. Edinburgh, 2006; A. I. Macinnes, *Union and Empire: The Making of the United Kingdom in 1707*, (Cambridge, 2007). For the Politics of Darien, see R. E. Comunale, "'Ill Used by Our Government': The Darien Venture, King William and the Development of Opposition Politics in Scotland, 1695–1701." *Scottish Historical Review* 98(1), (2019). pp.22-44.

³⁴ Whatley's original survey of the economic causes of Union mentions the wool trade but does not discuss it in depth. See C. A. Whatley, 'Economic Causes and Consequences of the Union of 1707: A Survey', *The Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 68(186), Part 2, pp. 150-181.

For a wider history of pamphlets and the Union of 1707, see K. Bowie. 'Public Opinion, Popular Politics and the Union of 1707', *Scottish Historical Review*, 82(214), (2003), pp.226-260.

³⁵ Anon., *The Advantages of Scotland by an incorporate union with England, compar'd with these of a coalition with the Dutch, or league with France...*, 1706.

³⁶ Daniel Defoe, *A fifth essay, at removing national prejudices; with a reply to some authors, who have printed their objections against an Union with England*, 1707.

³⁷ S. Mackenzie, *Vis Unita Fortior: or the Union of Great Britain, in its civil and religious concerns...*, 1704; J. Hodges, *Essay upon the union. Shewing, that the subjects of both nations have been, by the union of the two crowns, justly entitled to all manner of privileges, which the ensuing Treaty can give them*, (Edinburgh, 1706). Opponents of Union also highlighted imports of English textiles as destructive to Scottish industry, though by jumbling their economic arguments up with moral ones they put themselves in an awkward position regarding

described as ‘the great question: what amends will be made to Scotland for the loss of the wool trade, and the difference in price, between wool after prohibition, and what it is now, when we export it abroad?’³⁸

The final Act of Union, in its fifth article, brought the entire Scottish economy under the English system of taxation and management – including both the wool export ban and tariff protections for woollen manufacturing. As article V of the Act of Union put it:

‘That all Parts of the United Kingdom, for ever, from and after the Union, shall have the same Allowances, Encouragements, and Draw-backs, and be under the same Prohibitions, Restrictions, and Regulations of Trade, and liable to the same Customs and Duties, and Import and Export. And that the Allowances, Encouragements, and draw-backs, Prohibitions, Restrictions, and Regulations, of Trade, and the Customs and Duties on Import and Export settled in England, when the Union commences, shall, from and after the Union, take place throughout the whole united Kingdom’

Within 20 years of 1688, the trading policy of the entire British world, from Virginia to Shetland, had been brought under the control of one Parliament, dominated by English voices, and located in Westminster.

It is tempting therefore, as many have done, to see Union as a fundamentally English imperial project. However, the reality is more complex, and the point I would like to make here is that in many ways, the Union emerged *against* Empire, rather than through it; from an appreciation among the people of Scotland and Ireland that unless they became part of a unified state that could support trade and manufacturing, they would slowly be transformed into imperial possessions by global economic change. Scotland was by the end fully inside the Union, with considerable representation in Parliament. In Ireland, a combination of close relationships between elites and fear of revolt created its position as a kind of eternal special case.³⁹ Woollen manufacturing was to become England’s prerogative. Yet unlike in America, where all manufacturing was suppressed, Parliament actively encouraged potential alternative sources of employment – particularly in the Linen industry. The 1696 Act that banned Irish wool exports also removed duties on the import of Irish linen to England. In 1704, Parliament went further, and legislated to allow Ireland to export linen to America without passing through English ports. Ireland was therefore established by legislation as a realm where the employment of people was considered an economic objective separate from the extraction of natural resources.

The position of Catholicism in Ireland made political union between England and Ireland, which many like Molyneux were already dreaming of as the theoretical ideal outcome, impossible. The Benefits of employment were to be reserved for Ireland’s minority protestant community – and the legacies of

luxury French imports. See David Black, *Essay*; See also J. Macle hose ed., *Miscellaneous Writings of John Spreull (commonly Called Bass John): With Some Papers Relating to His History, 1646-1722*, 1882.

³⁸ Defoe, *A fifth essay*.

³⁹ Some even argued that since Ireland was a ‘colony of empire’ rather than simply a plantation it could not be denied manufacturing to sustain its people without permanent suppression by force. F. Annesley, *Some Thoughts on the Bill Depending Before the Right Honourable the House of Lords, For Prohibiting the Exportation of the Woollen Manufactures of Ireland to Foreign Parts*, (London, 1698).

that decision, and the resulting development of Belfast as a major manufacturing centre, echo down the centuries to us today. In Scotland, a far more comprehensive process occurred. As is well known, the Act of Union opened up trade with England's American colonies to Scottish merchants. However, also bound into the Act of Union was creation a state-sponsored Scottish textile industry. The Scottish Parliament had initially sought a specific exemption from prohibitions on wool exports, but accepted that this was unlikely to be granted, and had therefore turned to what the Act of Union could do 'for encouragement of wool masters and woollen manufacturers'.⁴⁰ A measure was proposed in Parliament granting a bounty for textile production from Scottish wool, but this never made it into the treaty. Instead, the immensely lengthy Article XV, which also dealt with the equivalent, equality of customs duties, and the final end of the Darien Company, stated that "two thousand Pounds per annum, for the space of seven Years, shall be applied towards encouraging and promoting the Manufacture of coarse Wool, within those Shires which produce the Wool".⁴¹ The money took some time to arrive, and eventually the Scottish Board for Fisheries and Manufactures, its eventual legacy, redirected its focus to the linen industry, disbursing £380,000 in training schemes, subsidies and prizes between 1727 and 1815.⁴²

The Union emerged through the constant interaction of geopolitics, religious debate, global trade and local manufacturing, brought together by open political institutions. I have focused here on only a few aspects of the relationship between manufacturers and the Scottish and Irish Unions, and their role was in fact far more complex than I have given it credit for. What I hope I have indicated, however, is that at the economic heart of Union was an appreciation of the importance of employment to sustaining communities and ultimately popular consent for state political institutions. Crucially, this was a process that was not simply a reactive response to the agency of merchants and colonial administrators, but an active attempt to gain the benefits of increasing overseas trade. The significance of manufacturers and manufacturing communities to British state formation does not question the global, imperial focus of much recent scholarship – rather, it confirms it, by emphasising the importance of international trade to the development of the British state. What it does suggest is that studying the relationship between the British state and local English, Scottish and Irish society – putting it, as John Brewer suggested over thirty years ago, at the heart of eighteenth-century British history - allows us as historians to see the global agency and significance of those who, in the eyes of so many historians today, 'stood still'.⁴³

⁴⁰ NRS, Proceedings of the Scottish Parliament, 1706.

⁴¹ *The Articles of the UNION as they passed with Amendments in the Parliament of Scotland, and ratified by the Touch of the Royal Scepter at Edinburgh, January 16, 1707, by James Duke of Queensbury, her Majesty's High Commissioner for that Kingdom, 1707.* Whatley, 'Economic Causes and Consequences of the Union of 1707'.

⁴² A. J. Durie, *The Scottish Linnen industry in the eighteenth century*, (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1979); A. J. Durie, 'The Markets for Scottish Linen, 1730-1775', *Scottish Historical Review*, April, 1973, Vol. 52(153), (Apr., 1973), pp. 30-49.

⁴³ Or rather, English and Welsh. Welsh manufacturing was extremely small-scale and weak, and it is probable that because the Welsh economy was more rural, and more closely tied to subsistence, Wales looked to the state less – there was, in other words, less 'economy' for the state to support. However, this is only speculation, and while there has been some recent research on news networks and Welsh participation in political debate, more research on the political economy of Welsh economic actors is undoubtedly need. See L. Bowen, 'News Networks in Early Modern Wales.' *History* (London), vol.102(349), (2017), pp.24-44; L. Bowen, 'Information, language and political culture in early modern Wales', *Past & Present* vol.228, (2015), pp.125-58.