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THE DAWN OF ANTI-IMPERIALISM:

IRISH RADICALS AND THEIR LIBERAL PROJECT FOR MODERNISATION OF IRELAND IN THE 1780-90S
THEORY OF ANTI-IMPERIALISM: MEASURES AND IDEAS UNDER A LIBERAL PROJECT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF IRELAND IN THE 1780-90S
THE DAWN OF ANTI-IMPERIALISM:
IRISH RADICALS AND THEIR LIBERAL PROJECT FOR MODERNISATION OF IRELAND IN THE 1780-90S

HIROKO GOTO
DECLARATION

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SUMMARY

This thesis aims at showing the process of the radicalisation of British constitutionalism in late eighteenth-century Ireland, which contributed to the rebellion in 1798. From an analysis of contemporary political pamphlets, the context of political philosophy in Ireland between the aftermath of the American Revolution and the eve of the French Revolution is re-examined. The expansion of the British empire required a change in British constitutionalism in accordance with its imperial policy: from a civil-jurisprudential Lockeian paradigm to a sociopolitical Humeian one. Adam Smith and David Hume theoretically contributed to the formation of new imperialistic constitutionalism. The dissemination of their political economy (especially the theory of social progress) among those politically aware in the 1780's brought about awareness of the progress of society towards the commercial stage and of the need for creating a "civilized society" as a political society suitable for the commercial stage. This constitutionalism motivated young Irish liberals to seek to reform the old regime. Edmund Burke's political discourse, which had an influence on them, also rested on it.

The process of the change in the political views of leaders of the United Irishmen like Theobald Wolfe Tone and Arthur O'Connor, who came to renounce the ideal of British commonwealth, which imperialistic constitutionalism had disseminated, and which they had accepted as the framework of their political ideas, is examined. Pitt's strong line against domestic reform movement and increasing taxation for the continuation of war with France led them to criticise the exploitative nature of the empire. Even when the concept of a benign imperial framework was rejected, Humeian politics still provided a theoretical framework for radical re-interpretation of the British constitution on the principle of "restoration of genuine constitutional monarchy". Neither Tone nor O'Connor had been republicans in the sense of the republicanism created by the French Revolution. Irish political reformers had not been anti-monarchists. Hence, in their constitutional thought like the reforming Whigs, they had made a distinction between an Irish and a British Crown, and visualised a possibility of constitutional progress which resisted aristocratic control and the exploitation of Ireland to narrow imperial ends. They were originally, in terms of their political thought, proponents of Humeian and Smithian views, whose views shifted as they saw the impossibility of maintaining Hume-style balance in political life. Hence, seeing the impossibility of eliminating aristocratic control, and losing their illusions about the reforming role of the imperial power, their political action became more radical in 1797 and 1798.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

D.E.P.  Dublin Evening Post
F.J.  Freeman's Journal
H.M.C.  Historical Manuscript Commission
I.H.S  Irish Historical Studies
N.A.I.  National Archives of Ireland
N.S.  Northern Star
P.H.  Parliamentary History
P.R.  Parliamentary Register
P.R.O.  Public Record Office, London
P.R.O.I.  Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
R.I.A  Royal Irish Academy
T.C.D  Trinity College, Dublin
Chapter 1:
INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH INTO THE UNITED IRISHMEN AS A
STUDY OF SOCIAL THOUGHT

The crime of rebellion among the ancients was commonly expressed by the terms ... novas res moliri (to make innovations).

David Hume

1.1 The Formation of Liberal Doctrine after the American Revolution

This thesis is written with the aim of examining the effects of the modern liberal doctrine which emerged during the epoch of “the Atlantic Revolution”, on Ireland as a case study. The formation of the liberal radicalism which served as leading ideology in the United Irish movement has been neglected in studies both of the United Irishmen and of the 1798 rebellion: the role of ideology has not been centre-most. The historical context in Ireland, as well as the context of study of European political thought of the 1790s, has led to an emphasis on republicanism. Marianne Elliott, a leading historian of study of the United Irishmen, has declared: “The most important legacy of the 1790s to Irish history is that of militant republicanism. It was born in 1795 when the United Irish Society decided to seek the French alliance in a rebellion against English rule in Ireland”. ² This identification indeed was endorsed by the existence of republicans in the United Irish societies and by French documents which her research rests on. ³ However, this widely-accepted view often overestimates the influence of France, as portrayed in expressions like “convinced francophilia” (Marianne Elliott) and “French disease” (Dáire Keogh), and underplays the independent growth of liberal doctrine in Ireland. ⁴ Observing that “their [i.e. United Irish readings] arguments were taken almost exclusively from Locke”, Elliott argues for an ideological change from Lockean real Whigs to militant republicans. ⁵ However, the facts of acceptance of the Crown of Ireland and citations from Locke in their pamphlets after 1795, which she noticed, makes a definition of “militant republicanism” problematic. To cope with this problem, and the apparent conflict with the republicanism she stresses elsewhere, she remarks that “The United Irishmen admired other republics, but as a form of government they considered republicanism unsuited to Ireland. They were

³ Among the members of the United Irish society, Napper Tandy, Henry and John Sheares can be seen as republicans. However, they did not play important roles in publishing.
⁵ Elliott, ibid., p.27.
totally committed to the concept of a limited monarchy ...". If ideological
definition is revised from militant republicanism to liberal radicalism, and if not
only Lockean liberal doctrine but Humean and Smithian political economy are
seen as important sources of liberal radicalism, then the United Irishmen would
be better profiled in ideological terms.

The liberal radicalism in the United Irish movement was a product of two
gaps in the British constitutional system in those days: one between the old-
regime of government and new civil society, the other between the ideal of the
British free constitution, which was supposed to guarantee happiness and
freedom of the whole empire, and the actual hegemony of British Parliament.
The first led to claims for political reform, specifically democratic claims for
mass participation into politics and liberal claims for the end to Catholic penal
law. The researches of Nancy Curtin and Jim Smyth revealed the democratic
aspect of the United Irish movement. The second gap led the American colonies
and Ireland to resistance to the British empire. However, since the United
Irishmen have been seen only as reviving the 1782 claim for legislative
independence as far as their claim for national independence is concerned, the
question as to the novelty in their resistance has remained untouched.

In this thesis, I shall show how resistance to the British empire was
legitimated in Ireland between the 1780s and 1790s. The discourse on
resistance was advanced throughout the two decades as part of constitutional
problems within the framework of the British constitution and adopted by
several leaders of the United Irishmen. In this sense, the United Irish
movement was contextualised in the discourse on the British constitution and
can be seen as a natural course of development of the constitutional issues the
1780s situation implied. The French revolution and republican government, as
well as national liberation movements in South America, were indeed factors in
the formation of the United Irish movement, but they were external stimuli in
the sense that they inspired some leaders of the United Irishmen with new
liberal ideas and political engagement. Only a framework of the development of
liberal doctrine in British thought from the time of John Locke enables us to
understand the movement in the dynamics of power struggle principally
between monopolised government and people.

While government and people were to a degree combined under the name
of civil government in Britain, in Ireland, people were isolated from government.
Some young lawyers, future leaders of the United Irishmen, found many rifts in
the Irish sociopolitical system, not only between the Irish government and civil
society, but even within civil society itself. They realised that the rifts inside
civil society had left the people with no weight in government. Hence, they had

6 Elliott, ibid., p.29.
to make efforts to form the people’s voice. Their main battlefield was the very process of communication among people where public discourse took place. Its media were not only the press but public meetings, petitioning, trials, elections, and so on. Late eighteenth century Ireland was influenced by liberalist norms based on the British constitution.

The notion of liberal constitution was associated with the ideal of the British empire. In this thesis, I use a potentially misleading key-term: “imperialistic”. This eighteenth-century “imperialism” differed from the later Leninist definition. In the late eighteenth century, imperialism was justified in terms of civilisation, namely the good effect it has on underdeveloped society. It was Lenin who broke the association between imperialism and civilisation, by illustrating how the accumulative mechanism of capital, exploiting natural and human resources, far from civilising the colonised societies, actually impoverished them. His theoretical analysis, together with the wave of nationalism in the nineteenth centuries, led to denunciation of imperialism as invasive. This very negative understanding of imperialism, however, differs from the notion of empire in eighteenth-century Ireland. In Britain and Ireland in those days, the image of the Roman empire was often appropriated to that of the British empire. This parallel is set out in Hume’s writing and Burke’s. The British empire meant no more an invader than the Roman empire in the European classical tradition. As the latter, despite a vast levy on its provinces, civilised them by laws and commerce, the British empire was supposed to actualise a commonwealth in its original sense by means of the British constitution, commerce and industries. It was Burke who set out a liberal ideal of the British empire in the 1770s. In his famous speech “On Moving his Resolutions for Conciliation with the Colonies”, he defined the concept of “emprise” as follows:

[A]n empire is the aggregate of many States, under one common head; whether this head be a monarch, or presiding republic. It does, in such constitutions, frequently happen (and nothing but the dismal, cold, dead uniformity of servitude can prevent its happening) that the subordinate parts have many local privileges and immunities. Between these privileges, and the supreme common authority, the line may be extremely nice. Of course disputes, often too, very bitter disputes, and much ill blood, will arise. But though every privilege is an exemption (in the case) from the ordinary exercise of the supreme authority, it is no denial of it ... Now, in such unfortunate quarrels, among the component parts of a great political union of communities, I can scarcely conceive any thing more completely imprudent, than for the Head of the empire to insist, that, if any privilege is pleaded against his will, or his acts, that his whole authority is denied; instantly to proclaim rebellion, to beat to arms, and to put the offending provinces under the ban. 7

This view clearly accepts disputing differences between the mother-land and colonies as natural results of the liberal principles of the British constitution. In Burke’s eyes, the British empire was nothing but enlarged civil society. Irish supporters of imperial administration, also motivated by the ideal of civil society, saw the connection with England as an indispensable condition for the welfare of Ireland. In this sense, their imperialism does not mean uncritical submission to the exploitation by the British empire. However, the ideal of the empire also raised the question of administrative authority. Despite his liberal ideal of the empire, Burke insisted on the administrative power of the British Parliament over colonies. On the constitutional discontent of American colonists, Richard Koebner observes: “The point at issue in the coming war was not whether there was a British Empire or whether the thirteen colonies belonged to it, but whether the Parliament of Great Britain was entitled to sovereign authority over that part of the British Empire”. The same can apply to Ireland. Against the supremacy of the British Parliament, Irish patriots like Henry Grattan claimed the independence of the Crown of Ireland from the British Parliament. In their eyes, the British empire consisted of the two kingdoms, whose sovereigns were the one and same, and their loyalty was placed not to the British Parliament, but to the Crown of Ireland.

When the British administration was put in a difficult position in the relations to American colonies and Ireland toward the end of the 1770s, it was Adam Smith who proposed them an idea to solve the problem of sovereign authority over colonies. In An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, he observed:

Under the present system of management, ... Great Britain derives nothing but loss from the dominion which she assumes over her colonies. ... To propose that Great Britain should voluntarily give up all authority over her colonies, and leave them to elect their own magistrates, to enact their own laws, and to make peace and war as they might proper, would be to propose such a measure as never was, and never will be adopted, by any nation in the world. ... Such sacrifices, though they might frequently be agreeable to the interests, are always mortifying to the pride of every nation, and what is perhaps of still greater consequence, they are always contrary to the private interest of the governing part of it, who would thereby be derived of the disposal of many places of trust and profit, of many opportunities of acquiring wealth and distinction, which the possession of the most turbulent, and, to the great body of the people, the most unprofitable province seldom fails to afford.

Although not overlooking the strong opposition of those who held to their vested

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interests, he suggested that Great Britain should give up all authority over colonies and "settle with them such a treaty of commerce as would effectually secure to her a free trade, more advantageous to the great body of the people, though less so to the merchants, than the monopoly which she at present enjoys". By the term "colonies" in this citation, he means only British colonies in America, not including Ireland. As to Ireland, Smith himself argued for a union with Great Britain. The most important advantage which he expected Ireland would gain by the union was a compleat deliverance from a much more oppressive aristocracy; an aristocracy not founded ... in the natural and respectable distinctions of birth and fortune; but in the most odious of all distinctions, those of religious and political prejudices; distinctions which, more than any other, animate both the insolence of the oppressors and the hatred and indignation of the oppressed, and which commonly render the inhabitants of the same country more hostile to one another than those of different countries ever are.

He did not foresee that the aristocracy in Ireland could be removed by the people of Ireland. Rather, he expected Great Britain to guarantee them "happiness and tranquillity" and "deliver them from those rancorous and virulent factions which are inseparable from small democracies". His theory underpinned the ideal of the British empire. Some Protestants, in contrast to the Irish patriots who saw the position of the British administration not as that of the empire but of England, had a belief that the liberal policy of the imperial administration would help Ireland to be liberated from its aristocratic monopoly and to promote national wealth. By the term "imperialist" I mean those who embraced the Burkeian liberal ideal of the British empire and the Smithian development theory. Imperialists were actually liberal in the sense that they rested on the liberal constitution of Great Britain.

Although proceeding from the same starting point as liberal imperialists', some liberals, however, gradually came to regard the British administration as serving to preserve domestic monopoly rather than to abolish it. The hard-line attitude the British administration assumed towards republican France since 1792 and the Fitzwilliam affair in 1795 were to confirm them in their view. They now dismissed the ideal of the British empire as nothing but an old empire like Spain and France. In this thesis, I will call them "liberal radicals". It must be noted that "radical" is used not in the sense of "extreme", "fringe", "revolutionary" or "militant". Throughout this thesis, the term "radical" is used to refer to fundamental criticism of an established social order. Those who fundamentally criticise an actual state and pursue the transformation of social structure in accordance with liberal principles are termed "liberal radicals".

11 Ibid., p.617.
12 Ibid., p.944.
13 Ibid., p.944f.
Hence, "radicalisation" means criticism or claim striking at the roots.

Radical young lawyers among the leading United Irishmen like Theobald Wolfe Tone, Arthur O'Connor and William Sampson planned the rising of armed people against the government with the intent of securing the independence of Ireland from both Britain and France. At the same time, however, they claimed the legitimacy of their scheme to establish a united independent nation in the name of the liberty of the "British constitution". As we shall see later in Chapter 8, their crucial need to gain from at least those of liberal tendency in parliament and court public acknowledgement of the justice and legitimacy of their principles is reflected in their discouragement and indignation when they were labeled as rebels by the Lord Chancellor, John Fitzgibbon, in his speech in parliament in 1797.

Then, what element of the British constitution enabled people in Ireland to violate the law in the name of the law in their resistance movements? It was the modern liberal principles which Locke discussed in the last several chapters of *The Second Treatise of Government*. Locke argued for the right of resistance. In Chapter XVI, about the rights of the conquered he declared that "by Virtue of Conquest" the conqueror could have "no lawful Title himself to Dominion over" those who did not consent to the war or the Children of the Captives themselves, or the Possessions of either.... shaking off a Power, which force, and not Right hath set over any one, though it hath the Name of Rebellion, yet is no Offence before God, but is that, which he allows and countenances, though even Promises and Covenants, when obtain'd by force, have intervened. 14

If Ireland was not conquered by England, people still retain "a Supream Power to remove or alter the Legislative, when they find the Legislative act contrary to the trust reposed in them". 15 In the political discourse of liberals in Ireland, the principles were repeated as if they had been systematically established in the British constitution. Liberals saw the machinery for articulating differences by litigation in the constitutional system: the rights of trial, of freedom of the press and of petitioning the king as Royal subjects on the same footing as Englishmen. The access to these rights which every "citizen" enjoys constituted the unique notion of the public in British civil society; the public sphere is always mediated by the opinions which make private differences explicit and open in the litigation. David Hume, a liberal re-interpreter of British constitutionalism in the eighteenth century, observed, "upon these opinions ... of public interest, of right to power, and of right to property, are all governments founded, and all authority of the few over the many". 16

15 Ibid., p.367.
The liberal radicals in Ireland, however, realised that the liberal elements of the British constitution were not at work in the actual state. Then, what impeded the actualisation of the liberal? It was the fact that the status of a "citizenship" was not enjoyed by everyone. Those without citizenship, and hence outside the aegis of liberty of the constitution, were not in a position to turn their private differences into a public dispute. Moreover, the inequality caused by the fact that not all were citizens fissured civil society. Inequality was caused mainly by class difference in Britain, while in colonised regions including Ireland a homogeneous natural society was transformed into a heterogeneous one by imperial power, and hence by cultural and religious differences as well as class ties. Those who made a commitment to political reform in the 1780s, seeing inequality as an impediment to the development of civil society, appropriated the ideal of liberty in the British constitution as the normative basis of their challenge to hegemonic ideas.

The political system of the British empire contained another kind of machinery for representing publicness: the Crown, which was symbolic of general interest and impartiality. The two kinds of publicness, one represented in social interaction between private opinions, and the other in the Crown, composed the stability of the British constitution, because this dual system could absorb the shocks caused by the clashes of private differences. Although social interaction, existing only on the basis of temporary compromise between disputing private differences, was very fragile, the Crown as a symbolic representation of publicness, secured the solidification of society. British political thinkers like Burke and Hume were aware of the good effect of the dual system: the symbolic publicness of the Crown, maintaining the facade of a state, admitted of conflict between private individuals in public and even within government itself, as Hume observed:

The Reason, why the laws indulge us in such a liberty seems to be derived from our mixed form of government, which is neither wholly monarchical, nor wholly republican. It will be found, ... a true observation in politics, that the two extremes in government, liberty and slavery, commonly approach nearest to each other. 17

This view, shared by the rising middle class, became the self-consciousness of the late eighteenth century civil society in Ireland. Therefore, even under the stimulus of the French Revolution, most activists in the reform movement, despite Burke's anxiety, never thought of the overthrow of the monarchy itself. Rather, independent of the Revolution, Irish activists, finding the normative basis for their criticism of the actual state of the Irish monarchy in the ideal of publicness of the Crown, claimed that the Crown had been distorted to represent not publicness, but the private interests of England. In aiming to

evade the established public authority of the British and the Irish government, they located the authority of the symbolic publicness of the Crown, not in England, but in Ireland. In the very last stage of the united Irish movement, the radicals, seeing the monarchy as representing merely British interests, still argued for the restoration of pure constitutional monarchy, rather than for republicanism.

1.2 Awareness of the Historical Necessity of a New Political System

In recent years, revisionism has emerged in French Revolution studies, posing drastic challenges to the traditional view, which can also throw new light on the study of the United Irishmen. Revisionists, first of all, dismiss Marxist historiography, which portrayed the French revolution as a capitalist bourgeois revolution in the context of class struggle. This criticism implicitly applies also to the “Anglo-American” Marxist approach which has seen class struggle as the predominant element in historical development. Under the influence of Eric J. Hobsbawm and E.P. Thompson, some historians saw the masses, involved in a political convulsion and pushed onto the political stage, as the key element of the sociopolitical movement in various countries at the time of the French Revolution. In the case of Ireland, Nancy Curtin is representative of this tendency. The class-centric perspective, however, does not allow for the importance of the emergence of a new public sphere of opinions where new political legitimacy was to be created, because classification of each element of the whole movement in classes removes a link between a struggle for innovation within an existing political sphere and that in a broader social sphere including various kinds of social organisation: regional communities, organisation including the Volunteers and the militias, secret societies like Masonry, political societies, religious societies, and so on (all dimensions of sociability in a political sense).

The formation of a broad range of societies brought about the transformation of the public sphere and the emergence of new normative legitimacy. The widened public sphere was to come into conflict with the politically institutionalised old public sphere. It is this conflict which caused a world-wide convulsion in the late eighteenth century. Crane Brinton, an analyst of French Revolution studies, portrayed the friction as “a feeling on the part of some of the chief enterprising groups that their opportunities for getting on in this world are unduly limited by political arrangements”. In another work, avoiding a general story of a heroic people driven to arms by tyranny, he

distinguished between the politics of liberalism and both class interests and the disorder of social revolution. His authentic liberalist approach illustrates how the public sphere was transformed by the conflict between two different sorts of publicness.

Denis Richet, one of the French revisionist historians, pointed out that the axis of the French Revolution was not a revolutionary bourgeoisie but a liberal reforming elite, mainly from the nobility; although the elite were divided between 'Aristocrates' and 'Nationaux', both sects could share the common aim of overthrowing despotism by political reform. Many revisionists, finding in the creation of the National Assembly the apogee of the modern liberal revolution in its genuine sense, have claimed that the ideal or essence of the Revolution had taken shape in the reform movement under the Old Regime before the fall of the Bastille. François Furet considers the political convulsion which followed in the unfolding of the revolution as a dérapage of the Revolution. The most important point in his account is that he understands the power struggle in this uncontrolled dérapage as "an autonomous political and ideological movement that must be interpreted and analysed as such", not as an economic one between classes. It is not a class struggle, because the social movements in the late eighteenth centuries, including the French Revolution, were a normative conflict between the old public sphere based on conventional representative publicness (the monarchal/ aristocratic state system) and the new one based on communicative publicness (civil society). In such circumstances, two different ideological paradigms guided people in their conception of new political society: civic humanism and civil-jurisprudence. (The theoretical paradigm of political thought from the 1770s to the 1790s is described as schematised as Sketch 1 and Sketch 2.) Hence, the claim against the British government in the 1770s was basically composed of two quite different strands: patriotic civic humanism and Lockean liberal doctrine.

Civic humanism stemmed from a concept of classical republics in Greece and Rome. This ideology stressed public virtue and allegiance to a native country, which required the members of a republic to participate on an equal footing in public affairs and to assume the military duty of defense of the country. Eighteenth-century civic humanism, seeing the public will of each community as the supreme authority, implied regionalistic nationalism and patriotism. Especially, since the Presbyterians had a tradition of town meetings and congregations -both urban and rural- in which respect for formation of public will had been embodied, they had an affinity with civic humanism.

However, although a modern historian, Nancy Curtin, misunderstanding the term “classical republicanism”, directly connected the tendency of civic humanism in the Presbyterian tradition with the modern notion of republicanism, we should not understand it as the germ of Irish “republicanism”. “Classical republicanism” is a paradigm crystallised out of the political discourse of the eighteenth century, in comparison with the language of civil-jurisprudence. Therefore, it is not the opposite of constitutional monarchy, which the modern notion of republicanism signifies. The historical importance of the strand of civic humanism at that time should be seen not in the evocation of anti-monarchism, but in the emergence of regionalistic nationalism (sometimes the stimulation of patriotism) and in a demand for democratic formation of public will within the framework of the British constitutional monarchy. This identification of classical republican tradition with anti-monarchy has led historians to an illusory question as to why the Presbyterians turned conservative in the latter half of the 1790s: Marianne Elliott, portraying the development of “revolutionary nationalism” in the Protestant community as spasmodical, went so far as to observe: “the apparent conversion of Ulster from extreme radicalism to extreme royalism in the course of the 1790s has baffled many commentators”.  

In the studies of British political thought, Caroline Robbins and J.G.A. Pocock have seen radical thought in the late eighteenth century in terms of the tradition of classical republicanism and civic humanism. The “eighteenth-century commonwealthman”, as Robbins refers to a traditional republican belief shared by the Country Whiggish gentry, can be seen as a contemporary British version of civic humanism. The writings of Molyneux and Swift led Irish country gentlemen to become aware of their own publicness as “statesmen”, serving the res publica, the public affairs and good of their country. As Robbins points out, the ideal of commonwealthman in fact stimulated young Protestant Irish men like Grattan to demonstrate the patriotic righteous mind in the Volunteers as well as the parliamentary reform movement, and resulted in the national convention at Dungannon and the legislative independence in 1782. Their principles were based on civic virtue, and even Catholics were assumed to be capable of becoming citizens of their own polity, or “republic”, provided they could afford to meet their civic duty.

In the parliamentary reform movement in Britain in the early 1780s, the ideal of classical republic took clear shape in its British version: the notion of “free-born” English man under the ancient constitution. Challenging the “patrician” representative publicness of the aristocracy and gentry, the

22 Elliott, Partners..., p.3, p.17.
reformers drew their intrinsic plebeian publicness from a republican element in the ideal of ancient constitution. The word "free-born" itself represents the immediate membership of their own polity. Hence, to the extent that the notion of classical representative publicness was actualised by the parliamentary reform movement in the 1780s, Pocock's "civic humanism" as well as Robbins's "commonwealth men" grasp a part of reality at that time.

On the other hand, Lockean liberal doctrine saw the constitution since 1688 in terms of civil jurisprudence. Interpreting governments as "made by the Consent of the People"\(^\text{22}\), especially the legislative power as "only a Fiduciary Power to act for certain ends", it admitted of alteration or cancellation of the contract by people to defend their fundamental rights. \(^\text{23}\) At the same time, this liberal doctrine appropriated the stress on public virtue in civic humanism for the purpose of government. "The eighteenth-century commonwealthman", as conceptualised by Caroline Robbins, typically illustrated this strand. Those who spoke on behalf of Ireland, like Jonathan Swift and William Molyneux, and patriotic politicians like Henry Grattan, pointed out the lack of consent to be governed both in the past and in the actual constitution in Ireland in terms of Lockean liberal doctrine. They argued not against the British constitution itself but claimed the application of the same principle of the constitution both in England and in Ireland.

In research on British political thought, there is implicitly another theoretical axis. For this, J.G.A. Pocock uses the term "ideology of commerce", by which he means the theory of commercial society in Scottish enlightenment thought, of which Adam Smith and David Hume are typical. The transformation, which can be articulated as a progression from the Lockean notion of civil government to the Humean one of civil society, appeared in the use of the novel concept "expediency" in political discourse. British administration and the legislative body of Parliament began to use the concept as a principle for justification of imperial policy. Not only government but liberals out of office came to use it. Especially, it was to become more significant when the Catholics began to claim their civil rights on the ground of the expediency for the nation as a whole of their enfranchisement. The concept of expediency represented a new way of thinking: it contained the germ of utilitarianism, which was brought about by awareness of civilised commercial society.

The spread of "expediency" caused the significant transformation of the foundations of constitutionalism from Lockean contract theory to Humean balance of power. As early as the 1770s, some exponents of jurisprudence in

\(^{22}\) John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, p.336.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., p.367.
Great Britain, including Hume, Smith and Tucker, though accepting the 1688 political system, dismissed the Lockean justification of the 1688 Revolution, as resting on a fiction of entrusting the natural rights of individuals to government. They found an efficacious mechanism of checks and balances of power in the British constitutional monarchical system, which was able to absorb the shock of internal conflicts in the stability of a triangular power construction composed of The King, Lords, and Commons, and they justified the 1688 system by reason of its expediency in enabling civil society to subsist. They began to consider society, especially political society, as a mechanical system consisting of the balance between authority (power) and the right of freedom (counter-power). In their eyes, law was not the matter of legitimacy based on purely rational consent in law-making, but the matter of a machinery for controlling power, which was driven by passion rather than reason. In this way, in parallel with a deepening economic and cultural understanding of societies within the jurisprudence of the eighteenth century, emerged the transformation from the Lockean contract theory to the Humean theory, conflating mechanical legal device and the conflicting power of human passion.

Hume saw the Lockean notion of allegiance based on the original contract as an unnecessary assumption for justification of the established power, and asserted that the reason for our observance of the established political authorities and moral rules was simply the security, which those authorities and rules could bring to “the commerce and intercourse of mankind, which are of such mighty advantage”, by preventing “the encroachments of the strong upon the weak, of the violent upon the just and equitable ... the observation of these general and obvious interests is the source of all allegiance, and of that moral obligation which we attribute to it”. Hume declared a new principle of jurisprudence for civil society: “If the reason be asked of that obedience which we are bound to pay to government, I readily answer, because society could not otherwise subsist ”. This justification of obedience was to be adopted by Burke in conceptualising “expediency”, by which he meant effectiveness in the preservation of actual society. He said: “Expedience is that which is good for the community, and good for every individual in it. ... if we are to judge of a common-wealth actually existing, the first thing I inquire is, What has been found expedient or inexpedient? And I will not take their [i.e. the learned] promise rather than the performance of the Constitution”. However, the concept of expediency was not solely conservative; it was to be construed in a liberal way. The Humean notion of “civil” society required social justice in the sense that the

strong should not encroach upon the weak. This condition was seen as indispensable for society to be called civilised. Without the political maintenance of balance of power, increasing discontent and an oppressive reaction to it would easily lead civilised society to degenerate into a savage one. Hume emphasised the necessity of ridding society of obvious inconvenience to keep it advantageous to “the satisfaction of those very passions’ of ‘selfishness and confin’d generosity’ that characterise the human mind”. Burke’s conception of “expediency” is not distinct from just and right. In Charles Parkin’s words, “Burke uses the word to convey an idea of fittingness or suitability to conditions in which utility and justice are combined”. This expedient view prompted the liberals to regard the organising of a fair and just society for the sake of common security, as a constant social obligation.

Hume’s political dynamics transformed traditional Whiggish liberal doctrine based on Lockean contract theory. Hume’s adoption of dynamics and mechanics for the framework of his politics brought about an affinity between his politics and a “constitutional” thinking in a literal sense. As L.A. Scaff points out, “Hume’s conception of science, history and society are brought ... in the constitutional idea. In Hume’s political philosophy we see the original contract replaced by the constitutional convention, or promising replaced by rule-enactment as the primary political activity”. It was this transformation which was to provide a theoretical basis for the radicalisation of liberal constitutionalism in the 1790s. However, it must be noted that the new constitutionalism was shared during the 1780s both by those who would be called conservative in later years and by liberals, as we shall see later in this chapter.

Even the American War was discussed in terms of expediency. While the American colonists, seeing the conflict as the matter of right, accused the British parliament and administration of injustice, on the grounds of taxation without consent, most political opinion in Britain considered the issue overwhelmingly in fiscal terms. The chief concern on the British side was an increasing national debt consequent on the need of funds for the defense of the empire. Therefore, in their eyes, it seemed to be just and natural for people in the American colonies, who had enjoyed the benefit of defense, to pay a fair share. Even those who took the opposing view against continuation of the war, based their argument on expediency, though for the reason that the American

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29 L.A. Scaff, ibid. p.214f.
colonies would overburden the mother land and were not worth retaining at the price of increasing the national debt. There was indeed a fundamental gap between the language of justice and that of expediency at this moment, but few people on the British side noticed it. Accordingly, the claim for civil rights of the inhabitants of the colonies against the authority of the British parliament, legally advanced by the American colonists within the framework of traditional Lockean liberal doctrine, was left untouched in British debate and eventually put aside in favour of the expedient reasons.

However, the expedient perspective entailed an alternative conception of society. Contemporary thinkers understood commerce not only as a profitable branch of economic activity but as the creation of new interactive social relations. Further, we may say that the very notion of commerce enabled them to discover a civil society, where individuals assume sociability by interacting with one another, not as public persons but as private ones. The social interaction of private individuals produced a new sort of publicness which consisted in a consensus of opinion: communicative publicness. Unlike classical publicness, whose proper sphere was the world of the tribe, clan, family and nation, communicative publicness stemmed from the sociable world of friendship: societies, associations, companies, clubs, which were “the product of the ‘ordinary commerce of the world’”. In this way, the two kinds of publicness are parallel to Nicholas Phillipson’s distinction between two worlds. He portrays this new sociable world as follows:

[M]en from different walks of life confronted each other as friends and equals and learned that conversation which was the instrument that forged the bonds of friendship. By cultivating the arts of conversation and friendship they would learn to value tolerance, detachment, moderation and a respect for the value of consensus as a means of maintaining the bonds of society.

Although Pocock points out that “the locus of virtue shifted decisively from the civic to the civil, from political and military to that blend of the economic, cultural and moral which we call the social for short”, he overlooks the fundamental transformation of publicness itself in accordance with the self-consciousness of commercial society. While classical publicness relied on personal virtue, the modern one consisted not in virtue but in social consensus in communicative actions, namely in commerce in its wider sense. For instance, Thomas Paine observed: “The invention of commerce has arisen since those [uncivilised] governments began, and is the greatest approach towards

universal civilisation, that has yet been made by any means not immediately flowing from moral principles."  

Such a change in the conception of society was brought about by progress as set out in the Smithian four-stage scheme of history: hunting, pasturage, agriculture, and commerce. The notion of social progression from agriculture to commercial society, the fourth stage, led people to conceive of themselves as standing at a turning point of history. Paine, again cited for an example, regarded the principles of the universal civilisation of commerce as “improving the condition of man by means of his interest” and as cordialising “mankind by rendering nations, as well as individuals, useful to each other”. George C. Comminel refers to this kind of social consciousness as “liberal materialism”, a concept originally formulated in the mid eighteenth century independently by Turgot in France and Adam Smith in Britain, and which was embraced by political reformers in both countries. The paramount importance of liberal materialism was the notion that the progress of a moral sense depends on economic development; the established political system, if it does not suit its evolution, turns into a impediment to the progress of society. Ronald Meek, noting the current of liberal materialism in Scottish enlightenment thought, says that its socio-historical view suggested that each mode of subsistence “corresponded to different sets of ideas and also different sets of customs, manners, and morals”. Unlike Marxist historical materialism, liberal materialism did not see history as an inevitably unfolding process of contradictory elements, but as sequential changes towards a more civilised condition, which human endeavour could promote. Hence, it led people to take economic affairs as the first item on the agenda for the attainment of the fourth stage: the commercial society. The spread of a liberal materialist tendency is attributed not only to Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, but to David Hume’s *The History of England* and Montesquieu’s *The Persian Letters*. Hume’s writings changed classical civic virtue, public good, to the modernised civil one: industry (industriousness). The public good was seen as only a result of industry/or industriousness in the commercial society. It is this current which arose in the middle of the 1780s and which is a key factor in accounting for the Revolution in the following decade.

Equally paramount in the theory of commercial society, was a change of view of human beings, from the substantive perspective to the relational. Human beings are seen as changeable in accordance with social contexts,
conditions, and situations. In commercial society, everything including each individual must be involved in social interaction, and then defined and evaluated in relationships with others. The perception that human beings are by their nature social was to become the core of rational radical thought like Paine's, Wollstonecraft's and Condorcet's. These thinkers perceived the social element in human beings, which meant a necessity of association with one another for actualisation of human potential. As is clear in Paine's quotation above, they involved themselves in the social reform of commercial society with intent to develop human potentiality. 37 Pocock, saying that "Paine remains a difficult figure to place in the age between revolutions", understands him as "no republican in the classic eighteenth-century sense" and as fitting "in the history of radical criticism" (Benthamian utilitarianism). 38 If we use the category of expedient perspective, Paine would be placed in it.

Paine's political thought began moving out of the jurisprudence paradigm into the socioeconomic one, as his association with French activists deepened by his visiting France several times in the course of his private business and political concerns just before and after the outbreak of the French revolution. In the spring of 1791, between the publishing of *The Rights of Man* part one and part two, he went over once more to France and joined the Girondin circle. This connection led him to collaborate in making a plan for a new constitution with Condorcet. 39 Although there was friction between Paine and some Girondins, the Painite radicalism embodied in his late writings after the part two of *The Rights of Man* was formed under the influence of Condorcet.

As Paine's example shows, the concepts of "expediency" and "commercial society" stimulated people to create a new era where private interests and independence of each individual as well as of each nation would be coordinated through social interaction. This is the novelty of the social movements in 1790s.

1.3 An Ideological Approach to the United Irishmen

Having prepared a revised framework for theoretical analysis, we come at last to the concrete issue of this thesis. The movement in Ireland shows the various versions of Whiggish liberal doctrine. It is also the first theoretical example of resistance to imperialism, made possible by Lockean notion of

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37 The slogan shared by William Sampson and Arthur O'Connor: "reform yourselves" reveals that they had the same view. For further details of this point, see Chapter 10.


resistance and the expedient perspective.

The different currents, in a greater or less degree, were present in late eighteenth century political thought to influence both reformers and radicals: French republican; the civic humanism of the “the eighteenth-century commonwealthman”; Puritan radicalism based on antinomian libertarianism; the millenarian moral economy. Patriot politicians like Henry Grattan and Henry Flood were confined only to the notion of statesman or commonwealthman. On the other hand, advanced radicals like Tone and O’Connor were influenced by the expedient perspective. The civic humanist ideology of the commonwealthman was only a secondary factor, which prompted the radicals to criticise the actual situation in terms of national interests and independence. By the same token, Presbyterian radical tradition in the North served as a stimulus to create the public and its opinion through participation of the common people in the public sphere.

Earlier researches on the United Irishmen did not throw doubt on the assumption by Caroline Robbins that the classical republican tradition, reflected in the ideal of commonwealthman, prepared a liberal political tendency “before Grattan and Tone”. Her “real Whigs” included Swift, Berkeley, and Molyneux as also Francis Hutcheson and William Drennan as typical of the Presbyterian liberals. Tone’s political tendency is identified with Grattan’s, and seen also as under the influence of a Presbyterian liberals like Drennan. In this way, the chapter entitled “The Case of Ireland” in her work offered a distorted view on the radical thoughts of the 1790s, and her picture of the United Irishmen as the movement of the Northern Presbyterian radicals has been widely accepted.  

Elliott, a leading researcher of this subject, endorsed Robbins’s view by her uncritical adoption of her framework. She sees the early leadership of the United Irishmen as “the protestant mercantile and professional classes of Belfast and Dublin”, who “were republican in the manner of the classical republicanism of the English ‘country’ or ‘real Whigs’, the eighteenth-century ‘Commonwealthmen’ or the writers of the Enlightenment, accepting monarchy but seeking to curb the powers of central government, to preserve fundamental

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liberties and to secure religious toleration”. L lumping Grattan and Tone together as real Whigs, she wonders what radicalised Tone and other leaders although there was no factor to do so in the real Whig ideology, and in the end attributes it to their ambitious personality and to contingent and external stimulations: “Their transformation into a militantly anti-English, anti-monarchical republican movement was produced by the reaction of a general European crisis upon the peculiar historical situation in Ireland”. O’Connor had already been treated in the same way in Frank MacDermot’s study. The fact that these and other studies overlooked the spontaneous growth of liberal radicalism in Ireland resulted in a one-sided view of the relationship between the United Irishmen and the French Directory. On the basis of these views, the alliance between the two was formed and maintained by the personal ambitions of the Irish negotiators and exiles in Paris and by common military interests they shared during the war with Britain. This account, although it might be convincing from the standpoint of straightforward political historiography, sets aside another aspect of the alliance, namely, an international liberation movement. The question as to whether the two sides shared any ideology or reform plan for an alternative world, and, if it did, what precisely it was, remains untouched. Hence, the movement of the United Irishmen has been treated as if it were independent of the international liberation campaign at that time.

Ian McBride, in his recent study of Drennan, pointing out the difference between the Whiggish tradition of commonwealthman and the classical republican tradition coming from the moral philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment and the political ideas of Protestant dissent, stresses the latter’s influence on Drennan and other Irish Presbyterians. Then, opposing the traditional view mentioned above, he comments acutely that classical republicanism among Northern Presbyterians was merely one of the strands of radicalised political thought in the 1790s:

The language of civic humanism, and of its radical political incarnation, classical republicanism, has only limited application as a framework for the study of political thought.

“Marianne Elliott, Partners in Revolution (Yale UP: New Haven, London, 1982), p.xiii. This quotation clearly shows Elliott’s weakness in political philosophy. Actually, “classical republicanism” means a type of traditional political ideal, a paradigm for linguistic analysis of political thoughts, and its antonym is “civil jurisprudential liberalism”, not monarchism. In the French Revolution era, republicanism was not necessarily antonymous to monarchy, as Thomas Paine said that republicanism meant a character and business of government, not its form. As Tone said whether democracy or aristocracy, the actual conflict in those days was that between hereditary monarchy/aristocracy and representative democracy. Not only Elliott but many Irish historians have misunderstood republicanism as antonym to monarchism, under the influence of the nineteenth-century vulgar Irish definition of republicanism. This simple but fatal misunderstanding has distorted the study of the United Irishmen from the outset.

Ibid., p.xiii.

in late eighteenth-century Ireland. It represents only one strand of a rich and eclectic radical legacy that was undergoing rapid transformation. This comment throws a new light on the subject.

Nancy Curtin, trying to find an Irish counterpart of sansculotte, makes light of the political tendency of the middle-class. Hence, she pays little attention to the ideological role of middle-class reformers. Especially, her stress on the mass organisation of the United Irishmen leads her to underestimate the importance of the Anglican young elite for the formation of the movement itself. The nature of the united Irish movement can be better understood under the French revisionist concept - modernisation of the political system to promote the formation of civil society - rather than under the traditional Marxist concept of bourgeois revolution, which Curtin seems to adopt. The movement of the United Irishmen was a reform movement for the modernisation and civilisation of Irish society by means of the creation of a new wider public sphere. To this extent, an Anglican elite, not only members of the United Irishmen but liberal lawyers and politicians, played a leading role especially in the constitutional struggle in Parliament, at the Bar, and in the press to reform the constitution within the Establishment. As the liberal French nobility did, the liberal Anglican elites nurtured the ideal of civil society, which implied drastic alteration of the Protestant constitution and abolishment of the Irish counterpart of the Old Regime, Protestant ascendancy.

From this perspective, we need to change the dimension of the subject from the United Irishmen as an organisation, to “the united Irish movement” as an ideological claim in political discourse. What a social movement in the past was cannot be understood in historical terms, as mentioned above, without interpretation and analysis of shared ideals and ideologies in it. The political discourses posed by the movement should be taken up and considered in the wider ideological context of the times. I aim less to classify the given samples into some paradigms or currents than to interpret the significance of the social movement itself. Hence, my research ranges over both the study of the eighteenth-century British sociopolitical thought, especially of the inner transformation of that which has been papered over with the term “Whiggism”, and the study of Irish history of the late eighteenth century mainly related to the movement of the United Irishmen, in which the transformation climaxed.


48 Nancy J. Curtin, The United Irishmen.
Chapter 2:
SEEKING CIVILISATION IN UNDERDEVELOPED IRELAND: AN IDEOLOGICAL ASPECT OF 1782

As poverty and hard labour debase the minds of the common people, and render them unfit for any science and ingenious profession, so, where any government becomes very oppressive to all its subjects, it must have a proportional effect on their temper and genius, and must banish all the liberal arts from among them.

David Hume

2.0 Transformation of British Constitutionalism

To what source should liberal radicalism in the 1790s be attributed? It does not at first sight seem controversial to identify it as an outcome of the reform campaign in the early 1780s, itself symbolised by the legislative independence of 1782 in Ireland. While the political event has been overestimated and called “revolution”, its actual ideological background has never been examined. Hence, the prevailing historiography, failing to reveal varied tendencies in the political campaign for independence and reform in the 1780s, has portrayed the popular movement in the 1790s as a revival. This view, held by modern historians, was equally one of contemporaries. Most relevant pamphlets in 1780 assumed the accomplishment of “free trade” to be an outcome of the brave conduct of the Volunteers, and historians like J.G.A. Pocock, following R.B. McDowell’s account, have understood Ireland as a successful example of a “patriot” revolution in the early 1780s influenced by the American war. Even in the 1790s, some of the United Irishmen, intent on encouraging people to campaign, retrospectively referred to “free trade” and legislative independence as the outcome of a national struggle towards independence.

The continuity between the two periods is a half-truth, made plausible by the fact that some activists in the 1790s, like William Drennan, were also advocates of reform in the 1780s. Furthermore, Drennan’s correspondence and that of Charlemont, the liberal politician patron, as accessible primary sources, seemed to offer historians easily discovered evidence for the continuity. However, in terms of the history of political discourse, history between the 1780s and 1790s was more complex. Research into contemporary political pamphlets reveals a new sort of liberal doctrine different from the patriotic tendency predominant in the reform movement in the 1780s, which was to take

shape increasingly during the decade and prepare solid theoretical grounds for the reform and independence campaign in the 1790s. At the outset, this political tendency existed only as an undercurrent in public opinion, especially among those pamphleteers and politicians, moderate and well informed in civil-jurisprudence and political-economy, who did not directly lead the popular movement for reform and independence in the first half of the 1780s. Rather, they kept their distance from the movement and sometimes challenged it. Focusing on the emergence of new liberal doctrine, a review of the ideological situation in the early 1780s is in order.

2.1 A Gap between Independence and Domestic Reform

Lord North, British prime minister, proposed free trade resolutions for Ireland to the British parliament at the end of 1779. For him, the resolutions were nothing but his reluctant acceptance of “the entreaties of Dublin Castle for liberal commercial concession”, with his hope that “his belated demonstration of generosity on the subject of free trade would preempt those who sought to secure constitutional reforms”. Despite his intention, Irish public opinion was divided into two streams. Some MPs on the administration side welcomed the resolutions in terms of economic benefits, seeing mutual benefits as the only means of restoration of the solidarity of the empire. This expedient view is explicit in Denis Daly’s speech, which criticised the naive patriotism of the Volunteers, that “any man that will take upon him to answer for consequences, or to say what effect interested men may have upon forty thousand men in arms [i.e. the Volunteers], is a much bolder man than I pretend to be”. As Lord Shannon’s motion to the effect that Ireland should be allowed to trade within the empire without any restriction shows, they hoped that Ireland would stand on the same footing as England in foreign trade. This meant that, relying on the economic power of England, they expected increasing economic interdependence within the empire, rather than economic independence. Although this vision had not emerged in the British administration at that time, it was to take shape in the earl of Shelburne’s policy in 1782. In one sense, it

3 James Kelly, Prelude to Union, p.25
4 See the speeches of Bushe, Denis Daly, Ogle, Metge, Burgh, Toler and so on in Authentic Minutes of the Proceedings of a very respectable Assembly, on the 20th of December 1779 (Dublin, 1780).
5 Ibid., p.10.
6 Lord Shannon’s motion on 21 December 1779 says that “a liberty for this kingdom to trade with the British Colonies in America, the West Indies, and the British Settlements on the coast of Africa, in like manner as trade is carried on between Great Britain and the said Colonies and Settlements, will be productive of very great commercial benefits”(ibid., p.57).
7 James Kelly, Prelude to Union, pp.42-46.
was a change of the old mercantile trade policy, which had been underpinned by legal restrictions over industries and people in the colonies, towards modern imperialism based on genuine capitalist principles. According to James Kelly, Adam Smith supported the concession of free trade to Ireland "on the grounds that it would be advantageous to Britain as well as to Ireland to break down the 'absurd monopolies' that bound economic life". Although the strengthened domestic monopoly consequent upon legislative independence was against his expectation, his case for free trade involved some liberal strands of imperialism. The issues of relaxation or abolishment of restrictions on Irish trade and of establishment of a national bank, therefore, cannot be seen simply as an act of conciliation by a British administration to counter the patriotic claim for independence in the Irish parliament. The British administration, despite tenacious objections from the British parliament, was ready to take new liberal measures to manage not only England but the empire.

On the other hand, those who opposed the supremacy of the British parliament, inclined to support patriotic claims. As shall be mentioned later, Francis Dobbs, drawing on William Molyneux’s argument, saw the implicit replacement of a matter of right (the constitutional question) with that of expedience (the economic question) in the policy of the British administration and its Irish supporters. He argued for the fundamental right of Ireland as an independent kingdom. Patriotic MPs like Grattan in the Irish parliament saw the new policy reflected in the free trade resolutions as a measure to prevent a move towards a modification of Poynings’ law. Moreover, their self-assurance was prompted by common cause with the Volunteers, who extolled civic virtue using the language of classical republicanism. The language of some Irish advocates of reform, even if they used the concept “ancient constitution” in common with British reformers, tended rather to stress loyalty to their native land as civic virtue, and linked it to military service as a civic obligation. For patriotic opposition and the Volunteers alike, the first agenda of political reform was the independence of their kingdom from the British parliament, rather than the dissolution of domestic monopoly.

The extolling of civic virtue, however, did not originate solely from Ireland. As shown in Section 3 in this chapter, in their speeches and addresses to the Volunteer corps, some leaders and Volunteer chaplains, not all of them advocates of reform, undoubtedly appropriated the language used by British

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8 Ibid., p.45.
9 Henry Dundas observed in his letter to Adam Smith on 30 October 1779: “There is trade enough in the world for the Industry both of Britain and Ireland, and if two or three places either in south or north Britain should suffer some damage ... from the loss of their monopoly, that is a very small consideration in the general scale and policy of the Country”. (E.C. Mossner and I.S. Ross eds., The Correspondence of Adam Smith, Clarendon: Oxford, 1977, p.200)
advocates of reform such as Cartwright and the Society for Constitutional Information, to convey a sense of undissolved unity of Saxon freedom or a militia spirit which Pocock referred to as "John Cartwright's fantasies". Not only Cartwright but the Society for Constitutional Information, drawing on John Trenchard's *History of Standing Armies in England*, stressed the importance of a militia as the basis of a free constitution, in opposition to an aggrandizing standing army of the Crown. Moreover, the British advocates of reform based mass enfranchisement on the rights of free men in the ancient constitution. Influenced by the American Revolution, the British advocates of reform launched into petitioning for parliamentary reform in the British parliament in 1779. Notable reformers like Richard Price and John Cartwright blamed corrupt and venal MPs for the execution of a self-interested policy, which offended American colonists and which had led to the war and the vast losses of the wealth of the empire. The logic of their criticism of the actual political state is noteworthy. Adopting a dichotomic framework between the noble classical republican virtue and the degrading mercantile self-interested mind, the British advocates of reform claimed to restore the former, namely the spirit of commonwealth man, in accordance with an new ideal of empire, which was supposed to secure common interests.

In the Irish context, on the other hand, the Volunteer corps, while embracing the militia spirit, aimed to defend their own free constitution against foreign enemies, namely, the British parliament and Catholic France, from the outset. Unlike Britain, where civic and patriotic expressions of classical republicanism were no more than a slogan for the reform movement, Ireland witnessed a real demonstration of civic duty in the Volunteer corps' activity. The reform campaign in Ireland was promoted by two groups. One was those who opposed British influence on the Irish administration in terms of original right and consent, rather than the aggrandizement of the administration and its native office-holders within the Irish political system. Deliberately or not, they replaced the internal constitutional issue with the Anglo-Irish constitutional issue. This was the very weakness of the reform campaign in the 1780s, which some young liberal Protestants were to recognise towards the end of the decade.

The other was those who judged the actual state from the expediency of the political and economic system. Some liberal Protestants advanced the issue of economic development in Ireland and of lawful modification of the machinery of the British empire, especially the restriction of British influence on Ireland, in a quite rational way. Although, as shown later in this chapter, their arguments were in favour of the British empire, it was their new constitutionalism which

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prepared the next stage for the 1790s, when the Catholics, together with members of the other two main religious denominations, actively joined the reform movement. If we recognise the significance of the expedient perspective, the reform movement in the 1790s should not be simply understood as a “revival” of the movement in the early 1780s.

2.2 Ideologies of National Independence
(1) Lockean Liberal Doctrine against the Concept of Expediency

When Lord North proposed the “free trade” resolutions to the British Parliament towards the end of 1779, although almost every MP in the Irish Parliament applauded his decision, Francis Dobbs, a barrister, raised some constitutional questions about Lord North’s procedure for his proposal, and warned the public that his proposition and the law, far from expanding the independence of Ireland, established the power of the British Parliament over Ireland. 11 Dobbs argued that the Irish parliament had addressed not the British parliament but the King of Ireland; therefore, the address should not have been treated as “a supplication to the parliament of Great Britain” by the minister. 12 By the same token, basing the sovereignty over Ireland on the Crown of Ireland, he demanded from the British government recognition of a kingdom independent of Great Britain, and asked whether the British parliament, considered Ireland as a conquered nation. 13 His logic implied the independence of the Crown of Ireland, which was actually absorbed into the Crown of England rather than united with it, but the existence of which was theoretically or ideally presupposed by the Irish people. Dobbs implied that the King’s dual position as holder of his crowns could result in the King as Crown of England being disloyal to the Crown of Ireland, remarking that although the king as monarch of Britain should observe the supremacy of the British parliament, yet, as monarch of Ireland, he must be independent of British authority and incapable of subjecting Ireland to Britain. He said:

“Had the King of Great Britain been in reality, what is nominally, King of France; had he held his court at Paris; would Great Britain have allowed the King of Great Britain in conjunction with the Parliaments of France, to bind them in all cases whatsoever?” 14

Dobbs’s argument for the independence of the Crown of Ireland from that of Great Britain was based on William Molyneux’s. 15 As Dobbs himself

11 Francis Dobbs, A Letter to the Right Honorable Lord North, on his Propositions in favour of Ireland (Dublin, 1780), p.11.
12 Ibid., p.6.
13 Ibid., p.8f.
14 Ibid., p.19.
mentioned, he shared this view with Frederick Jebb, a pamphleteer known as Guatimozin, and the same logic was to be adopted by Theobald Wolfe Tone in his pamphlet *Spanish War*! in later years. The MP, Yelverton, also took the same line in his emphasis on the authority of the King of Ireland. Seeking to exclude the influence of the British parliament, he planned to rest the union of both kingdoms on a common King. He remarked: “when I rise to enter my protest against the interference of the British parliament, I do it to perpetuate the supremacy of the King”. 36 In this way, those who made an effort to exclude the power of the British parliament over Ireland derived sovereign authority from the Crown of Ireland, and understood the constitutional relation between England and Ireland to rest on a consent to entrust the primary sovereignty to the holder of the Crown of England. This interpretation can be seen as an application of the Lockean original contract to Anglo-Irish relations. The idea of restoration of the Crown of Ireland was increasingly held in public opinion, and the Regency crisis in 1788-9 was to bring about an unforeseen opportunity for the Irish parliament to demonstrate the procedure for entrusting the authorities of the Crown of Ireland to the Prince Regent.

Dobbs’s argument for the rights of the conquered nation reveals the very essence of liberal doctrine embedded in Lockean constitutionalism, which Molyneux advanced by applying Locke’s discussion about conquest to Ireland. Based on the boasted freedom of the British constitution, Dobbs argued that the freedom of people meant being governed by laws to which they had assented either by themselves or through their representatives; on the other hand, slavery was to be bound by laws to which they never assented, at the mercy of a power over which they had no control; this uncontrolled power also denied a final right of regaining freedom, which could not be taken even from a conquered people. His claim was based on the concept of justice, which is typical of civil-jurisprudential thinking, as follows:

“...let us fairly discuss it; ...If my ideas, if the ideas of my countrymen were unjust and unreasonable, we are surely entitled to an explanation why they are so, ...If they are just and reasonable, and not complied with, we have a right to do ourselves JUSTICE, if ever we have the power” 37

Understanding rights as a legal counter-authority to assert one’s own neglected truth in the name of justice, in opposing the predominant power, he maintained rights as essential for justice. His notion of justice initially rested on the most radical principle of Lockean consent theory: the endless trouble caused by the appeal of the Conquered to recover the native right of their Ancestors is no

36 *Debates in the House of Commons of Ireland, on a motion whether the King’s most excellent Majesty and the Lords and Commons of Ireland, are the only Power Competent to bind or enact laws in this kingdom. On Wednesday, April 19, 1780* (Dublin, 1780), p.18.
37 Ibid., p.9.
more than Justice does, where she lies open to all that appeal to her”.  
Dobbs’s liberal doctrine enabled him to discover in the attitude of the British government towards the acceptance of the free trade bill the danger of the expedient perspective. He pointed out that those with an expedient perspective, neglecting the most essential matter to the enjoyment of freedom and welfare of the two kingdoms, namely the mutual agreement between them as to their rights, misunderstood the matter of rights as a mere issue of expediency for themselves. He observed: “the most absolute Monarch on Earth may make his subjects happy, but whilst he has the power of making them miserable, they are not, they cannot be FREE”. Especially referring to a right to tax Irish people, he forewarned people that that, without a right to tax themselves, Irish people would be only “a treasury filled for the use of Great Britain”, even if they got the wealth of the Indies. Dobbs’s doubt shows that when expediency was for the first time adopted as a justification of the rights and policy by the British administration, even liberal minded persons were critical about such a way of thinking, because of its unstableness, and preferred a classical genealogical basis for rights, namely, inherence or inheritance. Hence, Dobbs’s liberalist argument stressed the fundamental difference between right and expediency, and the priority of the former for freedom.

(2) Alarm at the Dangers of the Expedient View

In his motion on 19 April, 1780, Henry Grattan also referred critically to the word “expedient”:

In passing the bills for liberating your trade, the British minister has made use of the words, that it was expedient to allow Ireland to export her own products. Expedient is a word of great reserve. Expedient is a word to Great Britain, by such a word she lost America, and plunged her country in scenes of blood. By this reservation your trade is in the power of England when ever she may think proper to take it away. a

Grattan read into the word the insecurity of the new commercial “freedom”, allowed by the British bill, and tried to drive the public to claim restoration of political freedom, accusing Great Britain of “usurpations”. Grattan’s notion of “freedom” belongs not to civil-jurisprudential language but to the patriotic civic humanist one, and means simply national freedom, namely the preservation of native land from any foreign power, as the following passionate words show:

There is an ardent combination among the people, a fire which animates the nation to its own redemption. A sacred enthusiasm, ...only belongs to the natural confidence of freedom. Forty thousand men in arms look up to the result of this day’s deliberation. Let the lovers of

a John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, p.386.
20 Ibid., p.16.
21 Debates in the House of Commons of Ireland..., p. ii.
freedom rejoice at that martial spirit which has operated to natural happiness.  

Stimulated by the conduct of the British government, which planned to bind armed force in Ireland by the British Militia Bill, Grattan proposed the Declaratory act, which was designed to declare that only the Crown of Ireland and both Houses of the Irish parliament had legislative power over Ireland. In justifying his motion, he said that, if the conduct of the English parliament in breaking its oath of allegiance to the Stuarts should be legitimatized by reason of freedom, the Irish nation was in the same situation as the British had been in. Furthermore, referring to the case of the 1688 Revolution, he argued that, unless the parliament declared itself to be a source of political authority, the king would have no title to the Crown of Ireland; if the declaration was condemned, the revolution of 1688 would be “an act of perjury, and the petition of right an act of rebellion”.  

Grattan pursued restoration of independence, or exclusion of British influence, by means of the establishment of the supremacy of the Irish parliament rather than of the revival of legal authority of the Crown of Ireland as the sovereign. Judging Ireland as a mere plantation because of the lack of independent legislature, he exclusively targeted the British parliament. Grattan’s argument shows a partial appropriation of Whiggish justification of the 1688 Revolution, as a precedent for establishment of the supremacy of the legislature over the authority of the Crown. However, his thinking and his concept of contract, even if he tried to follow the same procedure as in the Lockean notion of the 1688 Revolution, can be seen as feudalistic rather than civil-jurisprudential, because he never saw the nation as a number of different and private individuals living and working in a commercial society, but simply replaced the allegiance of a feudal lord to his native land with that of the parliament, which he considered as representing the national will. That explains why his seemingly jurisprudential language assumed a strong patriotic aspect and was more compatible with the civic humanist language of virtue, especially loyalty to the native land and the obligation to defend it. The following words in his speech about Lord North’s resolutions on the free trade explicitly shows this tendency:

[...]Let me remind gentlemen, as this country has by public spirit, and public pride placed herself high in Europe, and her own virtue recovered her own rights, an adherence to the same spirit is the best way to guarantee them.

While Grattan repeatedly claimed legislative independence in his eloquent and patriotic speeches in the Irish parliament, most MPs had no long term policy as to Ireland’s position in the empire for its future prosperity. They were

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22 Ibid., p. iii.
23 Ibid., p. viii.
24 Authentic Minutes of the Proceedings of a very respectable assembly, on the 20th of December 1779 (Dublin, 1780), p.40.
driven not only by the lure of pension and place, but by an ideological gimmick which eased their patriotic grievance without putting the British government to any inconvenience. For example, by letting people regard the legislative independence in 1782 as an Irish counterpart of the Glorious Revolution and praise themselves, the British government cajoled them into satisfying their patriotism. Although the British parliament, which increasingly represented the interests of British merchants and manufacturers, objected to the loss of their privilege and advantage over Ireland, in terms of administration of the whole empire on the principle of maximising expediency, the legislative independence of Ireland was not a revolutionary event for the British government, merely one of sensible choices, as long as the British government was capable of influencing the Irish administration.

2.3 An Outline of the Development of Thought in the Years to 1782

(1) Civic Humanism in British Advocates of Reform in 1780s

While traditional Lockean contract theory in Ireland became radical through Molyneux’s appropriation of Lockean principles for a situation outside Great Britain itself, early British radicals, namely the advocates of parliamentary reform in the 1780s, like Richard Price and John Cartwright, were in a different tradition of British radicalism deriving immediately from the Wilkesite movement and from remoter roots in the Leveller movement of the mid-seventeenth centuries. They were under the influence of the language of civic virtue. Conceiving people’s rights as a hereditary property of free-born Englishmen, they supplemented the notion of original contract with some of the ideas of classical republicanism. Therefore, despite their democratic facade, their political views were essentially premodern, and directed towards restoration of the republican element of the ancient constitution rather than actualisation of a civilised commercial society.

In *Give us our Rights...*, John Cartwright identified the language of expediency as that of the Court, and warned the public that, if rights could be granted or forfeited on the ground of expediency by government, the inherent rights of the people, which should precede the authority of government, would be annihilated. He observed: “[if] on the tyrant plea of expediency, one description of men may be disfranchised, so may any other and every other”. 26

Furthermore, his admiration of events in 1782 in Ireland shows his strong civic humanist tendency. He said:

25 See, for example, *A Lady, Glorious Revolution of 1782* (Dublin, 1782).
When virtue is the road to popularity and power, ambitious men will strive to be virtuous. Ministers themselves, who now treat you with so much contempt, in that case would be the champions of your cause; and find as much to say in praises of your patriotism, as lately they did for that of THE SELF-ARMSPEOPLE OF IRELAND, when they perceived them determined no longer to bear oppression. 27

Richard Price was also a man of civic virtue. His criticism of paper money was based on opposition to the vice of increased luxury. He saw political corruption as stemming from the decay of public virtue and from the pursuit of private luxury. As a result, while criticising political corruption only in terms of "extravagance" in public funds, he failed to appreciate the constitutional problem of parliament becoming progressively less master of its own house. He said: "our resources mortgaged beyond the hope or possibility of redemption - a debasing and wasteful luxury destroying public virtue, and producing a dissipation and venality in private life, and an extravagance in the expenditure of public money". 28

The same type of argument as Price's can be found in A second address to the public from the society for constitutional information. Referring to the rise and fall of the Roman empire, the pamphlet emphasised the importance of "the spirit and manner of the commonwealth", and cited Machiavelli's words that "laws and forms were weak barriers against the encroaching spirit of those who are intrusted with their execution". 29 The Society for Constitutional Information also published the Abridgment of that eminent patriot Mr. John Trenchard's history of standing armies in England, which, condemning the standing army as the mercenary troops of the King, advocated the formation of militias for the sake of maintenance of public virtue. The following message is a typical example of civic humanism derived from ideal classical republicanism: A just and equal government, which consults the happiness of mankind, is always the patron of morals, and the encourager of virtue; since neither extent of territory, nor superiority of wealth, nor the number of mercenary troops can bestow security, but the spirit, valour, and principles of its subjects armed for their own defense, and united in a common cause. 30

For these reform advocates, the real target was not the Crown but the Court, the parliament, corrupted by the latter, and the standing army. Accordingly, their slogan said: "this great and constitutional information, by restoring the English people to all their rights, restored them to all their virtues!" 31

27 Ibid., p.34.


29 A second address to the public from the society for constitution information (n.p., 1780),p.6.

30 Ibid., p.5.

31 Ibid., p.12.
So long as the “public” interests were pursued, the ideal of republic of virtue was compatible with imperialism. The Society for Constitutional Information admired the Roman empire, saying that its “commerce, agriculture, and population” increased “even amidst the tumults of war”. This awareness of development, in common with the development-centric political economy, justified colonisation as follows:

numerous bands of generous adventurers, issuing from the prolific bosom of the parent state, to transport their manners, rights, religion, to the extremities of the earth, and carrying with them the protection of heaven, and the seeds of future greatness.  

The uncritical identification of civilisation with colonisation in early British radicals’ political view suggests that we can scarcely regard them as “radical” advocates of reform.

(2) Ideology of the Volunteers in Ireland

The civic humanist language was shared by the Volunteers in Ireland. Moreover, Irish advocates of parliamentary reform were also essentially men of civic virtue, and had a disposition to patriotism. An anonymous pamphlet, *The Times: addressed to the virtuous and spirited freemen of Ireland: dedicated to the most disinterested patriot*, as the title itself immediately shows, conveys a highly spiritual patriotism represented by the language of civic virtue. The author blamed the contemporary politicians for having “as incitements to their actions the conveniences, or luxuries of life”, and not having any hearts able to feel “the real, public miseries of the people”; he appealed to men to wear “the uniform of virtue” and “assume the noble appearance of volunteers”.  

We can came across many instances which show how easily spiritual patriotism was taken over by Protestant sectarianism. Almost from the outset of their activation toward the end of 1779, some involved in the Volunteer corps saw themselves as Protestant guardians of freedom. In the situation that Catholic France might invade Ireland, James Creighton appealed to the Volunteers to “labour to support that constitution and government, which supports and allows the liberty of conscience, and never submit your necks to the popish yoke, which is the most galling and servile bondage”. However, the rest of his pamphlet seems directed less to encouraging than to restraining them, with an intent to keep them out of the advocacy of reform, especially of independence.

George Carson as well, asserting that “popery is of a persecuting spirit”, warned the Volunteers in Tullahunco and Balliconnel of Catholic invasion,

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32 Ibid., p.7.  
33 *The Times: addressed to the virtuous and spirited freemen of Ireland: dedicated to the most disinterested patriot* (Dublin, 1780), p.43f.  
though he commented that he did not intend “to widen the breach between the Protestant and Catholic inhabitants” of Ireland. His discourse was intended to colour civic humanism with the Protestant religion. As an example, he emphasised defense not only of the country but of its religion, and claimed the civil liberty was grounded on the religious liberty. He declared that man who would not contend for civil and religious liberties was “not only unworthy of life, and the noble name of MAN, but ought to be branded with that of COWARD”.

Similar examples are abundant. Those patriotic, or sometimes militaristic, pamphlets tell us that the actual Volunteers were not always democratic or liberal, or necessarily supported by the whole nation including Catholics.

(3) The Amalgamation of Civic Humanism and Lockean Liberal Doctrine in the Reform Campaign

The Volunteers were deeply rooted in the ideal of the militia and its republican virtue, but the position of each advocate of reform was not the same. Reflecting individual sociopolitical views, the ideal expressed was one in which civic humanism was mixed with civil-jurisprudence. A democratic element of civic humanism, increasingly amalgamating with a liberal element of constitutionalism, came to form a new radical thought. A scheme for a constitutional association is noteworthy in the sense that it appealed to the people to unite under a constitutional association, and showed an awareness of the existence of rifts in the Irish nation. The civic humanism in this pamphlet, departing from spiritual patriotism, resulted in a claim of domestic democracy, which sought establishment of the real public sphere, in which the whole nation could participate, as it declared that “our constitutional Demands” should be “not the Cry of a few factious Individuals, but the determined voice of a whole nation”. It went on saying that, while the actual enemies of the Irish nation, namely the “ministerial Troops”, had been united, those who had really meant to promote the public service in and out of parliament had been “acting without any connecting Bond, any mutual Correspondence, or any settled Plan of Operation”; accordingly, their endeavour without “regular and continued Efforts of Strength” would “produce only the sudden and desultory Twitches of a Convulsion”.

The pamphlet also claimed a need for the political instruction not only of
MPs but of every man in a society, in order to oppose the art and influence of authority which had been dividing people and keeping them out of the political sphere:

Every Individual may have some Opportunity, ... of asserting our Right of independent Legislation; Every Man has an Influence, within the Circle of his own Neighbours, Relations, Friends, or Dependents; and we ought to exert it; in the Instruction of the Ignorant, the Encouragement of the Timid, the Confirmation of the Wavering. 

This remark clearly conveys the author’s republican democracy, which put a stress on participation in Rousseauian public discourse. He himself declared that a constitutional association should be “of all those who link [in] the same Way the Republic”. 

The most important point of all that the author of the pamphlet conceived was that association might embrace “all sects and denominations of honest men” and that religious difference “should be reduced to a sort of testament, or creed of political faith ... like a religious Principle, producing an uniform Course of Exertions, that are habitual and regular”. This view shows both positive and negative sides of republican democracy. It dissolved the religious difference into political unity, while respecting the united policy as if it were a religious creed. Accordingly, instead of old boundaries between religious communities, another new boundary is to be formed around the united political community, namely "the republic". From this viewpoint, those who do not embrace the same republican democratic creed as the majority believe, would deserve to be excluded, as if they were “religious” enemies. This example tells us how exclusionism is intrinsic to republican democracy. Despite this limitation, the view of the pamphlet shows the existence of a democratic current in those days. It is noteworthy that almost the same logic was to be adopted by the United Irishmen in later years.

William Augustus Miles, a pamphleteer living in London, inscribed his pamphlet A political mirror to Edward Newenham, MP for Dublin County and advocate of parliamentary reform. His pamphlet is a good example of liberal political economy based on civic virtue. Despite his civic humanist emphasis on public virtue and his claim of restoration of the constitution to its primitive purity, Miles’s criticism of corruption was a moral one, though resting on two other crucial issues. The first was an economic problem that rents and taxes in Ireland were, far from being efficacious stimuli to development, impediments to the productive domestic circulation of money and goods. Referring to the absentee problem in Ireland, he remarked: “the affluent proprietors of great estate..., seldom residing there, spend their fortunes chiefly in England, or on the

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40 Ibid., p.15.
41 Ibid., p.19.
42 Ibid., p.27.
continent”. Though not explicitly, he found the real cause of Irish wretchedness, not simply in the vice of landlords, but in the drain of national wealth, which, collected as rents, should have promoted commerce and industries by the domestic circulation of money and goods. Furthermore, he pointed out that taxes were distributed as pensions, to “profligate and indigent” members of the upper class. 

The other problem he pointed out was a political one that the administration, manipulating MPs by means of pensions and places, procured the support of the Crown:

The crown having discovered, that places of trust, and emoluments, and pensions, were of admirable utility in removing all scruples of conscience, they were held out as rewards, for those who chose to support, and not to oppose it; “the representative...was paid in proportion to his services, from the collected wealth of the nation. Moreover, he was aware that the aggrandizing unconstitutional military force of the Crown and its unconstitutional influence over MPs were ready to be “adopted to COMPEL, as well as to SEDUCE” people “into an approbation of the measures of the Crown”.

(4) Liberal Challenge to the Volunteers: the Mutiny Bill and Patriotic Reaction

When the perpetual mutiny bill was proposed in 1781, some liberals suggested the principle that any armed force, whether standing army, the militia and the Volunteers, should be subject to appropriate laws to maintain civil society. They had already voiced their apprehension about the legally unrestricted activity of the Volunteer corps. Judging a standing army to be unconstitutional, they opposed the proposed bill, which allowed the army of the Crown to indefinitely exist in Ireland. By the same token, they spoke about the need of new laws to supervise the Volunteer corps. They did not favour a standing army of the Crown. In terms of jurisprudence, these liberals considered that an army destroyed the check-and-balance system of the constitution, and they asserted the standing army itself to be unconstitutional. Then, in economic terms, they blamed it for the rising national debt. Furthermore, in terms of civic virtue, it was seen as destructive of the virtue of the good citizen, the awareness of civic obligation and love of liberty and country, for example, as William Augustus Miles said:

the citizen is lost in the soldier or sailor. The love of country with them is a secondary condition, or confined merely to the defense of it from foreign enemy. This principle...is the principle by which the military in all despotic states are influenced.

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43 William Augustus Miles, A political mirror for the year M.DCC.LXXX. with notes explanatory and historical (London printed, Dublin re-printed, 1780), p.43.
44 Ibid., p.48.
45 Ibid., p.46.
46 Ibid., p.51.
While many advocates of reform conceived an idea of military associations of citizens responsible not to the Crown but the country, like the militia and the Volunteers, as appropriate constitutionally, a few liberals who criticised the mutiny bill in civil-jurisprudential terms, saw the dangers inherent in corps of Volunteers not responsible to authority. Among these, was Laurence Parsons, a student of TCD and later a friend of Wolfe Tone. Parsons published a pamphlet, in which he tried by interpreting relevant laws to demonstrate that the bill, which would legalise a standing army in Ireland, was itself unconstitutional: The experience of all ages and countries points out the danger of standing armies. Our own history exhibits numerous proofs of their ruinous nature. The charters of our liberty guard against them. The Bill of Rights declares, that a standing army is unconstitutional. A perpetual Mutiny Bill, establishing a perpetual army, violates the Bill of Rights.  

However, while opposing standing armies, he also saw civilian control of all sorts of domestic armed force by laws, whether British or Irish, as indispensable for the maintenance of civil society. This view is similar to Frederick Jebb's.

Disgusted at the Volunteers' conduct, Frederick Jebb, a liberal pamphleteer, critically remarked:  

[A] body of citizens meeting in arms, and professing to be so, have no more right constitutionally to influence the legislature, than the fifth regiment of dragoons has... ; and that if the legislature is influenced in this deliberations by the authoritative resolutions of armed bodies of men, under whatsoever description, the legislature is then superseded by the compulsion of an armed force, and its authority is transferred to a new power.  

He went on to say that, although he saw the Volunteer corps' conduct the year before as a result of prudent consideration of existing laws, he was not "deterred by the authority of names" anymore. His liberal doctrine, which sought to establish a civilised society in Ireland under the law and order provided for in the British constitution, could not accept the concept of Volunteer corps unanswerable to parliament.

2.4 The Growth of Liberal Doctrine on the Expediency Principle

Apart from Lockean liberal doctrine and civic humanism, there was another strand of political thought which composed an outline of the development of thought in the years to 1782: political economy. The existence of this strand would make clear that legislative independence was not simply an outcome of the patriotic campaign, or deserved to be called revolution, but a product of the modification of constitutionalism in the British empire by Humean politics and Smithian political economy. The principle of expediency in

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47 A Gentleman of T.C.D [Laurence Parsons], A dissertation upon the Perpetual Mutiny Bill (Dublin, 1781), p.16.
48 Frederick Jebb, Thoughts on the discontents of the people last year, respecting the sugar duties (Dublin, 1781), p.6f..
the newly modified constitutionalism was to be embraced by liberal Protestants in the tithe dispute, and increasingly undermined the ideal of Protestant constitution. As a first step, the emergence and divergence of expedient view must be clarified.

(1) Development-centred Approach to the Expediency Principle

As early as 1780, John Hely-Hutchinson, Provost of TCD declared his willing support for the union between Ireland and England under the empire with the intent of promoting economic growth in Ireland. Seeing economic development and social civilisation as the indispensable task which Ireland needed to accomplish, he thought that "the constitution of England and Ireland should unite" for the sake of that task. While he openly declared that English laws were competent to bind Ireland, he tried to persuade MPs to understand this submission not as forced subjection, but as a result of their ancestors' free consent based on their own policy for the benefit to Ireland, like the union of Scotland with England. His comments on the free trade resolutions convey his own policy and strategy. When almost all MPs were rejoicing and unreservedly praising Lord North, Hely-Hutchinson in a very roundabout way referred to his own amendment, which required imports to be administered with "equal drawbacks, bounties, and premiums as in Great Britain", and commented that, otherwise, "the import under duties equal to the British would not be beneficial to Ireland. Furthermore, for the sake of development in commerce and manufactures, he suggested that the restraints on Irish woolen manufactures should be abolished. He expected that bounties from Great Britain on Irish manufactures and fisheries would extend to other industries, and convinced the MPs to pursue the greater economic assistance offered by the British administration, by saying that "the loyalty, merits, and sufferings" of Ireland deserved to get it. As long as Great Britain could be expected to give Ireland a full participation in its trade, without forcing it to share an unbearable part of the burden, he judged the constitutional union with Britain would be more beneficial for the development and civilisation of Ireland than independence.

From this standpoint, he gave a serious warning to the Commons on the day when Grattan put forward his motion on the Declaration act in 1780:

We are in a way to increase our manufactures, we should improve them, should there be any ill temper subsisting between England and Ireland, the consequences would be alarming. At present we should make the best use of our Free Trade, and then recur to your constitutional

* Debates in the House of Commons of Ireland..., p.16.
* Authentic Minutes..., p.28.
* Ibid., p.30f.
question. It does not appear to me to be necessary at present. At the same time, Hely-Hutchinson declared himself definitely for the promotion of the militia act. Condemning the Volunteer corps’ demonstration in arms, he stressed a principle of the constitutional state that any power should be controlled by and subject to laws, and that “the having forty thousand men in arms not subject to any military law, nor amenable to any magistrate” was “a matter of great consequence”.

Hely-Hutchinson’s policy has much in common with the development-centred policies in today’s third world, which see ties with advanced countries as beneficial to the promotion of industry. It can be called the political economy or development theory of catching-up, which believed that economic development would bring about civilisation, cultural refinement and liberation, and that, in the catching up phase, some subjection to and injustice of the richer nations should be endured for the benefit of development. Although this development-centric political economy was to be refuted by a new anti-imperialist thought and movement, which claimed that the happiness and welfare of the whole nation cannot be accomplished under multiple subjugation, yet at least during the 1780s, the liberalist and utilitarian elements intrinsic in this political economy played an important role in the formation of a new liberal doctrine.

Stimulated by free trade, many pamphlets dealing with economic development appeared in 1780, and Hely-Hutchinson’s view was not the sole example of development-centric political economy. The author of Seasonable Advice... , expecting the wealth of England to be poured into Ireland to establish manufactures by taking advantage of the cheapness of labour, optimistically said: “from this period a fair prospect of national wealth, happiness, and prosperity, opens upon our view, if our own hands do not change the scene”. The latter part of these words means the need to check the patriotic demand for independence. His argument that the Protestant interests could be secured only under the protection of Great Britain conveys the view of the conservative Protestants. Furthermore, John Gray’s argument in A letter to the earl of Nugent, relative to the Establishment of a national bank of Ireland is a good example of development-centric political economy. Generally speaking, those in favour of imperialistic constitutionalism expected the empire to develop and civilise Ireland, Gray himself said: “I have ever ... wished well to that unpolished part of this Crown”, though without questioning the real cause of unpolishedness. He

52 Debates in the House of Commons of Ireland..., p18.
52 Seasonable Advice to the people of Ireland, during the present recess of Parliament (Dublin, 1780), p.11f.
54 Ibid., p.19f.
55 John Gray, A letter to the earl of Nugent, relative to the establishment of a national bank of Ireland (Dublin, 1780), p.31.
had published his plan for the national bank in Ireland six years before, and, in the financial crisis in Ireland in 1780, recommended attracting foreign investment at premium interest to supplement local funds for the issue of paper money. He observed:

Suppose the Irish Bank were to begin with issuing to the value of one million sterling in notes, a deposit of £200,000 in cash would be requisite for the circulating of those notes; and in the present exhausted state of the Irish Treasury, will it not, it may be said, be extremely difficult to form such a deposit? I answer, that by offering a good premium, such a deposit may be procured in Ireland or elsewhere, probably without any difficulty. Indeed he commented that the borrowing of money from abroad for fiscal purposes was a bad policy, but only because it might prompt luxury, which he saw as moral degeneration. He did not see a danger from economic subjugation in a foreign loan as such. Therefore, he declared that, "with the view of creating or multiplying money", it was "not dissipation but oeconomy to offer largely, to procure the sine qua non, which is to be the spring of abundance".  

(2) The Divergence from Imperialism in the Expedient Perspective

While among those who embraced development-centric political economy some accepted the actual legal inequalities between Britain and Ireland by reason of expediency for economic development, others were aware of exploitative aspects of capitalism and saw a need to address unfairness both in the domestic and imperial political systems. They did not have such an optimistic illusion as the imperialists had that a large capital inflow from Britain would promote the economic development of Ireland. In their eyes, unless the actual unfair legal framework under which the strong (Britain and the Protestants) had encroached upon the weak (Ireland and the Catholics), would be changed, there seemed no possibility of civilised commercial society in Ireland. Hence, they realised the importance of the establishment of rights to secure the welfare of the weak against the encroachment of the strong. In this sense, unlike the patriots who were keen to stand on a formally equal footing with Britain, they demanded "fairness" in imperial policy in accordance with the ideal of the Commonwealth.

The Usurpations of England... shows the liberal aspect of the expedient view. The author's pseudonym, a native of Ireland and a lover of the British empire, itself shows his political tendency, which embraced both liberalism and regionalistic nationalism, rather than patriotism. He seriously criticised the traditional policy of the British government and argued that the new ideal of the empire as a union of kingdoms and colonies sharing common wealth and prosperity, propagated by the supporters of the free trade bill, was an illusion in the absence of legislative independence to secure national wealth from legal

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58 Ibid., p.20.
usurpation by Britain. For example, he said, a law made by the English parliament had deprived Ireland of a very flourishing woolen manufacture for foreign markets, and the king also had not treated both kingdoms alike, but discouraged development in Ireland for the benefit of British trade. 57 He went on to say that, although Ireland had been refused a share in prosperity by Britain and had no concern in the origin of the quarrel between Britain and American colonies and stood to reap no benefit from it, Britain's enemies became Ireland's enemies. 58 From these disadvantages, he concluded that “trade and manufactures never could flourish in this kingdom, until we were emancipated from British authority”. Emphasising that the underdevelopment of Ireland had been caused not by natural forces but the legal power imposed on Ireland by Britain, he claimed that the right of “security to property and to the acquisitions of industry” was “the only method to excite man to labour, or to inspire him with a wish to increase his store”. 59 Like Dobbs, he warned the public that unless the constitution of Ireland was made independent of an external jurisdiction, an increase in Irish commerce would only render Irish people a more valuable plunder. 60

He opposed those conservative Protestants who assumed that independence from Britain would destroy the Protestant establishment:

We think ourselves much indebted to that Prince for the establishment [of] the Protestant religion in this kingdom. But to have encouraged our industry and to have extended our commerce would have been infinitely more valuable to us. The progress of trade, gradually introducing good order, oeconomy and knowledge amongst all ranks of people and enlarging their ideas, as their intercourse with mankind increased, would have operated more forcibly than any other cause, in freeing us from national prejudices, the absurdities of superstition and the influence of priests. 61

This view, showing the most liberal feature of the expedient perspective of development-centric political economy, saw in the civilisation brought about by the development of commerce a solution to a religious problem. It was a prototype of liberal Protestant ideology, which was to take shape through an ideological battle with the conservatives in the tithes dispute six years later.

The author also appealed to every town and every Volunteer company to form resolutions upon legislative independence and to transmit them to parliament. 62 The measures he asked people to take, though they can be seen

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57 A Native of Ireland, and a lover of the British empire, The Usurpations of England. The chief sources of the miseries of Ireland, and the legislative independence of this kingdom, the only means of securing and perpetuating the commercial advantages lately recovered (Dublin,1780), p.8f.
58 Ibid., p.11.
59 Ibid., p.27.
60 Ibid., p.29.
61 Ibid., p.10.
62 Ibid., p.22.
as a proposal for a national popular movement, were clearly distinguished from a demonstration of the Volunteers in arms. Against the centralising power of the imperial administration, he intended to secure regional interests and benefits by means of laws, and therefore required a legislative power independent of any foreign authority. To distinguish this tendency from patriotic civic humanism such as Grattan’s, it can be described as regionalistic nationalism, which was to be shared by the radicals in the United Irishmen.

When the bill for the relief of tenants holding leases for lives renewable for ever was proposed, the author of *The strong-box opened...*, inscribing it to Denis Daly, MP, discussed economic matters, especially the question of the lease system in farming. First, he considered that much actual indolence, sloth and misery in Ireland had proceeded from the absence of a general spirit of improvement and manufactures, which had further resulted from deficiency of capitals to “set many hands to work at any manufacture, to furnish materials, instruments and instructors”. *

Furthermore, arguing that short tenures also discouraged a spirit of industry, as regular employment or cash incomes led to tenants’ rents being raised at the expiration of their short tenure, he suggested that parliament should remove such restraints upon public industry and national improvement by the act to “grant leases of lives renewable for ever upon the tenants”. * He anticipated that this legal measures would activate capital investment, as well as the industry of the occupiers of the land; moreover, enhanced economic independence of tenants from landlords, in other words of tenant constituents from landlord candidates at election, would diminish political corruption. * In this way, even in his argument on political corruption, the author used the language of private desire (political economy), not of civic virtue (classical republicanism), and the argument for rights (civil-jurisprudence) was for a device not only for controlling the private desire of individuals but for stimulating it. In this, we have from political discourse in 1780s Ireland an example of the Humean amalgam of jurisprudence and political economy.

While Irish public opinion was hearing the news of resolutions on free trade, a project for establishing the National Bank of Ireland was made public and aroused much controversy. The subject of paper money and national debt had long been debated between civic humanists and development-centric political-economists, as researches on the Scottish Enlightenment show. However, the issue held more significance in Ireland. From the standpoint of a

* *The Strong-box Opened: or, a fund found at home, for the immediate employment of our people, and for preventing emigration. inscribed to D-n-s D-ly, Esq* (Dublin, 1780), p.6f.
* Ibid., p.13f.
* Ibid., p.20f.
critical analysis of imperialistic strategies, the establishment of a national bank in Ireland could be seen as a very subtle move made by the British administration, which bore the burden of a swelling national debt owing to the war with American colonies: while the administration was able to keep up the appearance of aiding Ireland in its serious war-included financial crisis, it would also sow the seeds of purely capitalist exploitation by the exportation of capital from England, to take advantage of the small capital fund in Ireland. Therefore, reactions in public opinion to the establishment of a national bank in Ireland are a test of the extent to which Irish exponents of development-centric political economy were aware of the danger of modern imperialistic exploitation. Among both patriots, who opposed Britain’s control of Ireland, and economic imperialists, there was failure to foresee the danger and inexpediency of the project. Frederick Jebb’s Considerations of the expediency of a National Circulation Bank at this time in Ireland is the only pamphlet in which we can find deep doubt about the expediency of a national bank for Ireland. Although he recognised the general efficacy of paper money and banking to increase the general productive stock of the nation, he saw them as unnecessary in the actual economic state of Ireland, where the productive stock was very insignificant because of the policy of the British trade laws to restrain Ireland from the acquisition of productive stock. He pointed out that British policy rendered Ireland into a mono-manufacturing country, and accordingly confined the productive labour of the nation to the linen manufacture alone; therefore, even if the linen manufacturers earned gold and silver at a profit, legal restraints and consequent limitations on productive labour limited the use of the money in the reproduction of productive stock; hence, the poverty of Ireland consisted in the deliberately continued deficiency of productive stock.

Jebb claimed that what first should be done was not the issue of paper money but the creation of capital by the accumulation of productive stock by taking advantage of the late liberal extension of Irish trade, emphasising that “the wealth of a country consists in the sum of the produce of the land, and of the productive labour of the inhabitants”. Furthermore, pointing out that the legal restraints also had impeded the natural circulation of goods and money within the country and extended the difference between rich and poor among the nation, he remarked:

The money which came into Ireland by means of the produce of the land, and the linen manufacture, instead of having been applied to the multiplying and creating of fresh productive stock, as it would have been if the country had laboured under no restraints, remained in few hands; and all the rest of the inhabitants, who were not possessed of land,

\[^{56}\text{Frederick Jebb, Considerations of the expediency of a National Circulation Bank at this time In Ireland (Dublin, 1780), p.18f.}\]

\[^{57}\text{Ibid., p.22, p.19.}\]
and were not connected with the linen manufacture, never saw it. They, from their political
discouragement, were forbid the use of their fingers and their faculties. 
Against those “willing to apply to the infancy of Ireland, a system which has
been the effect of the maturity of England”, he warned that paper money would
render Ireland into a market for foreign goods by encouraging imports by
merchants, and concluded as follows: “it will only advance the projects of our
merchants in a degree of acceleration, disproportioned to the increase of our
productive stock, thereby promoting Import rather than Export”. 
On the whole, the National Bank project was seen as indispensable and
efficacious for getting out of the financial crisis at that time. Thoughts on a
fund for the improvement of credit in Great Britain: and the establishment of a
national bank in Ireland written by “a friend to Ireland in the British
Parliament” said that a national bank would render “the wise, just and
beneficent purposes of Great Britain”, namely the free trade policy, “effectual”,
in the exhausted state of money and credit. The author deeply commiserated
with the Irish nation on their uncivilised condition, but blamed only “the avarice
of land-owners” for the miserable poverty of the multitude. 
A similar objection to Jebb’s pamphlet was however made in a patriotic,
rather than liberal, anonymous pamphlet, Some remarks on Dr Jebb’s
considerations... . Dismissing Jebb’s pamphlet as “coming from self-interested
men”, namely, private bankers in Ireland, it advocates an eager sense of a
jealousy to catch up with England by following the same course as England had
done: Ireland, altho’ in its infancy, yet may look forward to this great example, and by pursuing
with prudent circumspection the same established mode, must in the end produce the same
good and salutary effects, in proportion to the circumstances of the two kingdoms. 
The Humean perspective of expediency in Jebb’s pamphlet also found re-
echoes in one pamphlet, A view of the present state of Ireland, which was a
proposal for a new policy on Ireland on the principle of the welfare of the whole
empire. The author of this pamphlet, seeing society from the combined
perspective of commerce (political economy) and legal system (jurisprudence),
favoured control of commercial society by taking legal measures for the sake of
social justice. Saying that agriculture should be seen as a primitive
manufacture, he claimed that land was not only private property, but as much
national capital as money; as to money, it had “been found expedient in every

68 Ibid., p.19f.
69 Ibid., p.31.
70 A Friend to Ireland in the British Parliament, Thoughts on a fund for the improvement of
credit in Great Britain: and the establishment of a national bank in Ireland (Dublin, 1780),
p.14f.
71 Some remarks on Dr Jebb’s considerations on the expediency of a National Circulation
Bank in Ireland (Dublin, 1780), p.11.
country, for the laws to interfere between the avarice of the holder, and distress of the borrower”. He concluded that according to “the affluence or political necessities of a kingdom ... if this great principle of policy” had “been applied to money, ...it should comprehend the use of land”. Because the high price of land leads to the increased cost of articles of food, laws should impose restrictions on the price of land for the sake of the national benefit.  

The author, also judging a tax upon absentees to be “just and expedient”, suggested an absentee tax. His grounds for justifying the tax are noteworthy, because they can be seen as a mixture of civil-jurisprudence and civic humanism. He posed two principles. One was that “every man enjoying property in a country is bound to defend it”. He grounded this principle on two ancient traditions: first, “the honourable and essential part” of service in the feudal system is “that the tenants should be prepared, not only to defend their own property, but that the whole kingdom”, on which the existing constitution also was based; secondly, the ancient Greek legislators “supposed every man to owe an indispensable duty to his country, which in times of public emergency”, internal turbulence or external invasion, “would have rendered him infamous, if he had not exerted himself in it’s defense”. This conveys his civic humanistic ideal, which corresponds also to the Volunteer spirit. On the other hand, the second principle he posed was that every absentee “ought to contribute a part of his property towards the expense of that government, by which the remainder is protected”. As Hume considered property in durable objects like land as resting on fraud and injustice by usurpation or violence, the author understood “the original title to land” as “the right of occupancy”, and concluded that therefore “absence” implied “abandonment of that occupancy”, which must lead to at least partial loss of the possession.  

Examples of the amalgamation of liberal doctrine with the expedient perspective of political economy make clear the existence of an important new strand of liberal ideology, which soon emerges as a highly significant element in anti-tithe writing, and is to find later re-echoes in theoreticians like Tone and O’Connor among the leaders of the United Irish movement.

72 A View of the present state of Ireland (Dublin, 1780), p.61.
73 Ibid., p.97ff.; Hume, “Of the Original Contract”, in Selected Essays, p.288
Chapter 3:  
THE CONCEPT OF “PUBLIC INTEREST’ AND “TAXATION’ IN THE TITHE DISPUTE OF 1786-81

The theory of this system, such as it was fixed in 1688, is this: The people charge themselves, by a vote of their representatives, with the necessary taxes; but practice annuls the theory in two ways: the first is by intrusting the choice of the representatives of the people to a small number of individuals; and second is, by abandoning to the executive power the disposal of all stipendiary places in Church and State, and in attaching to them enormous salaries.

Arthur O'Connor

The Revolution of 1782 was a Revolution which enabled Irishmen to sell, at a much higher price, their honor, their integrity, and the interests of their country; it was a Revolution, which, while at one stroke it doubled the value of every boroughmonger in the kingdom, left three-fourths of our countrymen slaves as it found them...

Theobald Wolfe Tone

3.0 The Historical Significance of the Tithe Dispute

In Marianne Elliott’s account of the background, Irish politics in the 1780s after legislative independence in 1782 and the Volunteers movement, was relatively calm. However, her emphasis on the formation of Northern radicalism may have resulted in underestimation of the importance of the Right-boys movement and mass-politicisation in Munster in the middle of the decade. The movement caused panic in the established or conservative political interest. That in turn led to the so-called “paper war”, the main feature of the tithe dispute. In the political ideas in the contemporary pamphlets, emerged some of the principal elements of the liberal radicalism of the 1790s.

First of all, in order to make clear the connection between taxation and participation in the political process, the issues must be put in a wider and more general context: political controversy over parliamentary reform in Britain in the wake of the American Revolution. While the advocates of reform in the 1770s and 1780s regarded popular representation as an essential element of a fair legitimatizing process, traditional Whiggish constitutionalism divided on that issue. Reformists radicalised Lockean contract theory, influenced by Thomas Paine’s Common Sense, which emphasised that the liberty of the British constitution consisted in the representative system in the Commons: It is the republican and not the monarchical part of the constitution of England which Englishmen glory in, viz. the liberty of constitution of choosing a house of commons from out of their own body. ... Why is the constitution of E---d sickly, but because monarchy hath poisoned

2 Tone, Life, I, p.346.
the republic, the crown hath engrossed the commons? 3

Paine in the 1770s, although claiming like Hume in terms of expediency that the power of government, a necessary evil, should be constantly checked by the people, opposed Humean constitutionalism, which saw the freedom of England in the dynamics of the checks and balances of powers. Paine declared: “To say that the constitution of England is a union of three powers reciprocally checking each other, is farcical”. Dismissing the monarchical and aristocratical elements of the British constitution as mere remnants of ancient tyrannies, he presented a classical republican definition of freedom in terms of “the new republican materials, in the persons of the commons, on whose virtue depends the freedom of England”. 4 On the other hand, Whig anti-reformists like Josiah Tucker, labeling writers such as Paine as “republican Whigs”, claimed as “constitutional Whigs” that expediency, not consent, legitimatized the actual constitution set up in 1688. Their fear of republicanism led them to identify a claim for fair representation in the Commons with republicanism.

Once the transformation of traditional Whiggish constitutionalism stimulated by the American Revolution was transformed from a British context to an Irish one, it took on a religious appearance, because representation in the Irish parliament had been restricted mainly by religious reasons. As a result, the tithe dispute has been portrayed simply as a sectarian clash between Protestants and Catholics. However, if we look carefully into the initial intentions and motivations of pamphleteers involved in the dispute, we can find a source of the dispute in the conflict between the reformists (liberals) and the anti-reformists (conservatives) inside the Protestant camp. The conservative opponents of parliamentary reform in the Protestant establishment, fearing a potential union between the reformists and Catholic controversialists, attempted to shift the main point of their opponents from a political sphere to a religious one in an effort to make it difficult for liberal Protestant gentry reformists to leave the Protestant camp. Their main advocate, Richard Woodward, bishop of Cloyne, was a step-son of Tucker, the dean of Gloucester. 5 Tucker’s political conservatism was reflected in the arguments in Woodward’s pamphlet.

In fact, in the “paper war”, there was some common ground between the Protestant reformists, the Catholics, and the Dissenters. Reformists planned a renewal of the constitution and political conditions which had been established by the so-called “Glorious Revolution” of 1688. The two extracts at the head of

4 Ibid., p.69.
this chapter are a typical liberal view of the 1688 revolution and of the so-called "Irish revolution of 1782". Before the liberal radicals in the 1790s articulated the drawbacks in the Protestant Constitution in terms of the actualisation of civilised society in Ireland, those who embraced Humean politics and Smithian political economy, finding a critical defect in the representative system in the actual constitution, began to conceive a new constitutionalism, from as early as the middle of the 1780s. Re-defining government as a system for the greatest sum of individual happiness with the least national expense, they thought a fair representative system indispensable for securing the greatest happiness. By the same token, criticising on the ground of its inexpediency the Protestant Constitution, which legitimatized the tithe system, they claimed to secularise the Constitution. They sought not only to reform the rotten boroughs, but to secure the civil rights of the people without any religious exclusion, observing public interest and social justice, and tried to direct peoples' dissatisfaction towards reform of the constitutional system. In the tithe dispute, the reform movement entered a new phase. Unlike the claim for political reform in the Volunteers' conventions a couple of years before, the claim by those who advocated a new liberal constitutionalism had no classical republican hue. Simply holding up the liberal principle that taxation must entail enfranchisement, they began to undermine the Protestant Constitution.

3.1 The Catalyst of the Tithe Dispute

What directly started the tithe controversy was a letter of William O'Driscol with a title of secretary general of the Munster peasantry. He was a leading activist of the White-boys, and had been disputing with Arthur O'Leary about their hard line. O'Leary advocated a more moderate line for the purpose of getting support from liberal Protestant gentlemen. On 1 August 1786, a very misleading letter written by O'Driscol to Silver Oliver was published in the Dublin Evening Post, which in a very subtle way put O'Leary in a false position. Referring to a passage in O'Leary's letters, O'Driscol offered his own radical understanding of it. O'Leary's principles, in the context in which O'Driscol put them, were transformed into such revolutionary ones as to make them appear to conservatives as an advocacy of some dangerous design: "O'Leary told us, 

*William O'Driscol, Letter of William O'Driscol, secretary general of the Munster peasantry to Silver Oliver, in D.E.P., 1st August, 1786; Patrick Duigenan cited the letter in the appendix of his pamphlet An address to the nobility and gentry of the Church of Ireland.

[William O'Driscol], A letter to the rev Doctor O'Leary found on the great road leading from the city of Cork to Cloughnakility (Dublin, 1787), dated 25 November 1786; Arthur O'Leary, Address to the common people of Ireland, particularly to such of them as are called WHITE-BOYS, in the appendix of Mr O'Leary's Defence (Dublin, 1787).
plain as Friar could, that a God of universal love would not confine his salvation to one sect alone, and that the subjects’ election was the best title to the Crown”. Such clear statements, however, were not in fact to be found in O’Leary’s three addresses to the Whiteboys. O’Leary’s original emphasis was placed on the point that, although the gates of salvation were open not only to the poor but also to the rich, they were narrower for the latter than for the former; people should bear their grievance unless they can remove it lawfully, because “the Cross is the road to the crown”. O’Driscol parodied this, and deliberately replaced the Cross, namely, sufferings, with “the subject’s election”. This conveyed two different meanings; theologically, salvation by election on the Judgment Day; and literally people’s election of the King. Thus, O’Leary, contrary to his intention, became involved in the dispute, and a target of refutation.

Patrick Duigenan failed to notice the irony of O'Driscol’s words which were intended actually to damage O'Leary’s argument. Instead, taking O'Driscol’s text as a precise rendering of O’Leary thought, he asserted that “O’Leary” has informed them ... that the best title to the Crown is “the election of the people”. He commented that it is “a very dangerous doctrine, and utterly inconsistent with our constitution”. What the passage makes clear is that Duigenan, falling into a trap set by O’Driscol, classified O’Leary and O’Driscol together under the label of “some dangerous Incendiary”. Thus, O’Driscol successfully stirred up public argument, despite the lack of theoretical novelty in O’Leary’s real argument.

O’Leary, who had no wish on his part to be treated as one of the disaffected elements, initially had intended to make common cause with the Protestant gentry in the county of Cork. He shared with some of them a reform policy that wanted to substitute laws written in plain English for the actual complicated common laws, and to enlighten the uninformed public through public media like newspapers. O’Leary remarked, drawing on Beccaria’s enlightenment thought, that “a knowledge of the laws which affect the lives and liberties of the subjects” has been never “sufficiently communicated in this kingdom to the multitude at large”. Punishment of the ignorant is a kind of tyranny which confines political liberty. He went on to say: “every citizen should have the code of laws which affect his life. ... If the laws are made for the people, they know them”. This was the sole point meriting emphasis in his own argument which overall had no theoretical novelty. The importance of his address was the conclusion drawn from it of his close relationship with some Protestant gentry.

8 O’Leary, ibid., p.146.
9 A layman [Patrick Duigenan], An address to the nobility and gentry of the Church of Ireland as by law established (Dublin, 1787), p.18ff.
10 O’Leary, ibid., p.158.
He had a scheme to have the six letters of “A Dublin Shopkeeper” - his acquaintance and a Protestant Gentlemen - distributed free. He described it as “an act of humanity in the Associations composed of Noblemen and Gentlemen for the suppression of tumults in the county of Cork”. One of the consequences of O’Leary’s gentry affinities was, according to the Dublin Evening Post on 14 September 1786, “a report prevailing in this city for some weeks past, relative to the Rev. Dr O’Leary’s conformity to the Church of Ireland, ... which is now however contradicted by letters from Cork”. The D.E.P. related O’Leary’s response to this situation.

Mr. O’Leary, foreseeing the fatal consequences of such a conduct to the peace of the community, ... went on a Sunday to a Protestant church, to request of the clergyman and magistrates permission to speak a few words to the people when divine service would be over; The gentlemen not only complied with his request, but co-operated with his efforts in reclaiming the people to subordination and order.

From the D.E.P., this was a welcome outcome:
this singular anecdote of a Roman Catholic clergyman’s going to the church for the preservation of good order, and of the Protestant magistrates going to the chapels for the same purpose, is the death warrant of bigotry and fanaticism of this kingdom.

Just when O’Leary was making use of his connection with Protestants in the diocese of Cloyne, optimistically reported in the Dublin Evening Post, Woodward, the Bishop of Cloyne, published his pamphlet attacking O’Leary. O’Leary was upset at first, and on 23 December 1786, replied to Woodward, pointing out his misrepresentation of the friar’s earlier “Address”. He sent a letter to the Dublin Evening Post, which strongly refuted the bishop’s comment that O’Leary was sent to Ireland to sow sedition. O’Leary’s anger, which his disadvantageous Catholic background aroused, is expressed best when he says: “I was not then sent here! I came here, after having been forced in my early days into foreign countries, for a small portion of education, which was refused me in the land of my fathers, because I would not couple Tully’s Orations with a Charter-school Catechism.”

3.2 Liberal Strands in Protestant Ideology

O’Leary later published a pamphlet Mr O’Leary’s defence, but in it his argument for his case was not so sharp. However, he referred to some important writers in the dispute with whom he agreed. Among them there was an anonymous writer, whose pamphlet, Strictures on the Bishop of Cloyne’s

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11 Ibid., p.157.
12 D.E.P., 14 Sep. 1786.
14 O’Leary, ibid., p.118.
present state of the church of Ireland, should not be overlooked. O'Leary respected him highly (possibly a member of the Protestant milieu in County Cork with whom he had contact), and described him as a gentleman of distinguished abilities. This pamphlet, well written and with some knowledge of political economy, deals with the tithe problem in terms of taxation and national economy. The author, although accepting that clergymen had a right to their tithes for the reason of public benefit, pointed out that the actual tithe system should not be seen as a form of taxation, because it was less public than other forms of taxation. Compared with a land tax on landlords, he pointed out that the actual tithe system promoted only private interests. He argued that landlords had permanent responsibility for development of their land. He says: “[I]n case of public utility, such as navigation, roads, street, and many others, the landlord is obliged to commute for a valuable compensation”. On the other hand, he argued that the clergyman’s interest “ends with his life, or his promotion to another cure”. Even if the clergyman neglects to promote social welfare in his parish, the tithe would be secured for him. Hence, under the present system, the tithe produces nothing for the public good, and encourages the clergyman’s idleness. On this ground, he claimed that the system of tithes ought to be changed into one “less grievous to the payer, less determental to improvements”, and that those means are “more beneficial to the established Church of Ireland”.

Furthermore, the author discussed the tithe in detail in terms of the development of national wealth. Distinguishing tithes from general taxes for the support of government, he remarked that the tithe-system should be changed to a land-tax providing a fair equivalent for what the clergymen formerly received in tithe. The focal point of his argument concerned what taxes are most useful for the development of industry. He observed that the long-term lease and tithe-auction system in Ireland deprived tenants as well as landlords of their enterprise and funds, therefore the introduction of a new land-tax system would free the landlords of “that destructive measure, which drains the vitals of industry without increasing their income”. Adding to this, he touched on the public welfare of the poor, pointing out that “Parliament obliged each parish to maintain its poor”; because “in Ireland there is no public fund allotted by Parliament to that purpose; and the poor are left trusting to collections made in churches and chapels, and to private charities”. Then, he challenged Dr Woodward’s statement, by revealing the fact that those collections and charities are “chiefly supplied by cottagers, who are almost all Papists”; that is to say,

15 Strictures on the Bishop of Cloyne's present state of the Church of Ireland (London, 1787), p.21.
16 Ibid., p.19.
17 Ibid., p.23.
the established Church pays nothing towards provision for the poor. 18

Implicitly taking O'Leary's side, he commented about the religious element in the Munster disturbances. With irony he noted that "a fair vindication of the religion professed by Right Boys, and of the sincerity of their priests, exhorting them to a peaceful submission to the laws of their country" had through the religious bigotry of their opponents been taken as proof of their guilt, whereas, "every unjust aspersion" by Protestants upon Catholics' faith and conduct had irresponsibly evaded the "moral turpitude of offences" involved in tithes, the demand for which was seen as a lawful exertion of a right. Considering religious doctrine as "a mere speculative opinion", he ridiculed the Protestant clergy's absurd belief that "some religion, whatever its merely speculative tenet may be", promotes "utter infidelity"; therefore the Protestant government "in a religious view" should "provide means to counteract its success". 19 He not only criticised a simplified idea of the religious element in the disturbances in Munster, but also avoided a vulgar class-conflict idea dividing people and landlords. He asserted: "the interests of the landlord and of his posterity are inseparable from his tenants; Both interests must therefore be consulted by the landlord". 20 We should not think of his view merely as paternalism, because his concern was not maintenance of the landlords' interests, but the need for a concentration of funds for economic development, as well as for re-distribution and re-circulation of land-capital. He saw the cause of Irish backwardness in poverty itself. In his observation, the lack of capital and an ineffective political system left the Irish nation behind other European nations in enlightenment. He tried to resolve the present religious issues in Munster into purely economic elements. The reason why the masses in Ireland were still in darkness is not because most of them were Catholics, but because in fact they lacked the basic necessities of life. For him, development of industry and an increase in productivity should bring about peace and reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in future.

We can not identify who the author was. Nevertheless, the pamphlet shows the new constitutionalism of liberal Protestant gentry, which could be shared with liberals from other sects. In this context, the influence of the Volunteer Movement of 1782 must be considered. James Kelly argues that liberal Protestants were on the upward trend from the time of the Dungannon Convention in 1782 to 1786 when the conservative Protestant reactionary attack began to unfold. He sees in the passing of the riot act in 1786 the defeat

18 Ibid., p.24.
19 Ibid., p.44.
20 Ibid., p.34.
and decline of the liberal Protestant. 21 As his chief concern is the formation of Protestant ascendancy, while touching on the question of the counter-action of liberals from time to time, he has not explored it in any depth. The appeal to sectarianism implicit in the conservative Protestant reaction to the new constitutionalism of the reformists points to its secular rather than interdenominational content; the leaders of the established Church were obsessed by the fear that amendment of the existing constitution in a non-religious direction would result in the establishment of a Catholic constitution. The new liberalism, although conservative Protestants saw it merely in terms of religious tolerance, was actually brought about by the new social science, political economy, which de-mystified the traditional view of society. While in appearance the resolutions in meetings and political disputes concerned only relaxation of Penal Laws or the issue of tithes, in terms of their logic, the arguments in the resolutions proceeded beyond the question of tolerance. Generally speaking, a dominant motive in liberal Protestant arguments about political reform was anxiety about the low standard of economic development of Ireland. The question had already been raised as early as the 1770s. For instance, a letter in the Freemans Journal in 1777 in making a case for the relaxation of the Penal code argued:

We should not reject their request, nor let our excellent constitution be lamed by severities on such numbers of its citizens, who do not merit them... What benefit do they [i.e. the Popery laws] now produce to the community? No. Do they promote the peace and concord of society? No. The cultivation of the country? No. -The riches, strength or fidelity of the people? No. -What then have they produced? Barrenness to our lands, indigence and animosity, divisions and immorality amongst the natives... 22

This passage saw the Penal Laws as a cause of the underdevelopment of the country.

In terms of political economy, Luke Godfrey, rector of Kenmare, County Kerry, also proposed a reform plan of the tithe-system in his first pamphlet signed by “a beneficed clergyman” on 18 March 1786. As a rector on the fringe of County Cork, his views reflect the liberal or progressive thought which some Protestants in Cork had, and which was what O'Leary presumably appealed to. He saw the real cause of the decline of the income of the established Church as lying not in the disturbances and in the defiance of the people, but in the tithe system itself, which was only a custom, and not established by law. Noting that the tithe in those days was not only collected in kind as a rule, but its amount was calculated by measurement of patches and gardens, he proposed an


alternative plan to allow each church to rent an allotment to tenants and hold a lease, instead of claiming a tithe of the produce as in the present system. In his argument the main stress fell on the need to modernise the taxation system as a means of stabilizing financial relationships among landlords, tenants, and church. He estimated that the clergy would get a better income in the system he proposed than under the actual one. Although their nominal income might fall, rectors would be free of the considerable expenses incurred in collecting the tithe.

In his view, the middleman profits of tithe-proctors and canters were not only the real cause of the present mass grievance, but also an obstacle to industrial development. Moreover, like the author of the previous pamphlet, he found the ultimate solution to the tithe problem in an increase of profit brought about by the improvement of industry. If each parish church was allowed a tenth part of the leases originally drawn up between landlords and tenants; and if each tenant directly paid the established church a tenth of his rent in lieu of tithe, Godfrey observed, “in proportion as his own industry raises a profit on the nine parts which he rents from the lord of the soil, so will it raise a profit on the tenth part which he rents from the parson of the parish”. Seeing tithe as a kind of social-welfare-tax, he stressed that consent between landlords and tenants should be basic to devising a new and more convenient system. Compared with a conservative argument like Dr Woodward’s, two points are noteworthy: first, Godfrey saw the tithe as properly a public fund for social welfare, whereas the conservatives regarded it as the private wage of clergymen in return for their service; secondly, he saw the present tithe system as established not by law, but custom, and hence to be settled by agreement between the established church and the laity. On the other hand, the conservatives emphasised the legal rights of the Church of Ireland as by law established.

Godfrey opposed the utter abolition of tithes for an economic reason. He argued that, supposing under the new system he proposed the tithe were abolished, the tenth part of rent would fall into the hands of landlords, not the tenantry, and would become part of their private income: therefore, for the sake of the improvement of public welfare, the tenth part was more advantageous as tithes:

\[ \text{R} \]ather, as you thereby multiply the number of benefactors to yourselves, or at least more generally diffuse the means from which, in your distresses, you may expect comfort and assistance. In a word, by conforming to a certain state’s invariable regulation, you ascertain

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23 A beneficed Clergyman [i.e. Luke Godfrey], A project for a better regulation in collecting the clergy and for the ease and advantage of the laity, particularly the poorer orders (Dublin, 1786), p.7ff.
24 Ibid., p.16.
25 Ibid., p.17.
your own outgoings and your own incomes. You know with precision how you can feed, cloth, and educate your children - what portions you can afford to give - what prospects you can form for them ... 25

In this way, his economic rationale undermined the religious authority of tithes and rested its justification in social needs.

Godfrey's first pamphlet led immediately to a fanatical reaction by Duigenan. Duigenan spent most of the pages of his tract on an attack upon Godfrey. Assuming that the author under the style of "a beneficed clergyman" must be a Catholic priest, he observed with open hostility: "the virulent Papist here breaks out from disguise, and plainly tells you, you must extirpate the clergy of the established church, or the nation is undone". 27 The main focus of his refutation was directed against Godfrey's argument that tithes were a tax upon industry. Duigenan made a case against payment in proportion to the crops and in cash. He regarded as ridiculous the argument that the more the products increase, the greater quantity of tithes the church can gain; because, in the system Godfrey suggested, tithes meant "a tax which is levied in an exact proportion with the abilities and means of the persons who are to pay it", which Duigenan saw as unfair and discouraging tenants. He further argued that, if tithes become a tax paid in cash, they would be paid "not by the farmer, who disposes of it at fairs and markets", but actually "by consumers of the produce of the land, namely the community at large". 28 For Godfrey, however, this argument had nothing inconsistent with his own intention: re-distribution of social wealth to promote industrial development.

The difference between both men came from their basic views of society. Duigenan represents a premodern and pre- (or non-) economic view of social relations. To his mind, the authority and solemnity of religious institutions are an important element of social stabilization. On the other hand, Godfrey justified the established church as a "public" institute which had a social welfare function. For him, historical legitimatizing of the Church of Ireland did not establish the raison d'etre of the present established church. In order to convince Catholics of its power, he, as a clergyman of the established church, had no choice but to emphasise its public utility; nevertheless, even this merit was to be assailed by some Presbyterian pamphleteers in the later stage of the tithe dispute.

In reply to Duigenan's attack, Godfrey published a second tract. It set out more explicitly his political-economic way of thinking. The first point to note is his distrust of the policy of legislators. On the ground of equality of taxation and agricultural development, he criticised the resolution of the House of Commons

25 Ibid., p.18.
27 Duigenan, ibid., p.71ff.
28 Ibid., p.46ff.
in 1735 which exempted pasture from the payment of tithes. He described it as “arbitrary and impolitic”, because it discouraged farmers and led to a decline of agriculture. Supposing the tithe has been imposed on the pastures, “it might be converted to much better purposes, in giving employment and sustenance to the natives of the land”. Moreover, he saw the disturbances in Munster as a direct consequence of the resolution, because “it created an invidious distinction between the stock and tillage farmers, and raised a jealousy in the latter which might, in process of time, have operated on discontented minds even to tumult and disorder”. He ironically described the legislature as “all formed out of the first class of Theophilus[i.e. Duigenan]’s rogues, so far as to countenance his calumny for a moment”.  

Secondly, he elaborated on the proposal continued in his first pamphlet of holding an auction of the tithe in each parish, with the attendance of the poor cottagers at the auction. This would prevent the tenth part of their very scanty support being sold off to some idle canters, and then bought back at higher price; once a canter acquire the produce, “the poor occupier must pay to this canter an exorbitant premium to recover the labour of his own hands ...”. Words like “manufacturers of tithes”, “tithe market”, and “tithe auction” gave offence to Duigenan, who claimed that they revealed Godfrey’s contempt for the established clergy, and his settled design of leveling them with the vulgar ...”. In reply, Godfrey affirms that he can really see nothing improper in those words, and went on to say that “any man who has attended them will probably not dispute the terms”. For him, the market or auction became a place to form a consensus of parishioners; “in general there are no meetings more crowded than those tithe markets, acquaintances from the extremities of the parish are brought together”.  

Finally, he refuted Duigenan’s argument which accused the Catholics of causing the Whiteboys disturbance:

[W]herefore do you assert, Sir, that those wretches are all composed of Roman Catholics? The assertion is as unjust as it is illiberal. I can prove the contrary. But what is of more consequence than my proof, the judges on the two last Munster circuits can prove the same. Many Protestants (though I thank God mostly of the lower order) were as much engaged in tendering oaths, in processions by day, and in outrages by night, as any other description of men whatsoever.  

28 A Beneficed Clergyman [i.e. Luke Godfrey], A short, plain, civil answer to a long, laboured, and illiberal pamphlet intituled An Address to the Nobility and Gentry of the Church of Ireland (Dublin, 1787), p.25f..  
30 Ibid., p.27.  
31 Godfrey, A Project... , p.11f..  
32 Duigenan, ibid., p.75f..  
33 Godfrey, A short, plain, civil answer... , p.26.  
34 Godfrey, A Project... , p.14.  
36 Godfrey, A short, plain, civil answer... , p.36.  

He saw the disturbances as originating in the discontents of the lower class suffering from the exactions of the canters.

Concerning the disturbances in Munster, another pamphleteer George Grace was the clearest expositor of their economic origin. He stated that, if it cannot be demonstrated that the persons engaged in them were acting directly according to the tenet of their religion, their religion could not be the cause of the disturbances. The plain reason lay in the wretchedness of the Irish peasantry, and in the universal poverty which resulted in employment for the lower class not being "sufficiently in manufactures and commerce to let them taste the sweets of industry and wealth". His pamphlet came out immediately after the riot act passed the House of Commons, in two different editions: the title of one, signed by "a lay protestant", suggested a vindication of the Irish Roman Catholics; the title of the other displayed a critical attitude toward the lord bishop of Cloyne's pamphlet, and revealed also his real name. This revealed a clash of viewpoints among Protestants concerning the steps against the Munster disturbances. Grace deliberately disclosed his identity to emphasise the divide.

The first half of Grace's pamphlet opposed the assumption that Britain was a Protestant state and therefore free; whereas the polity of France was arbitrary, because it was Catholic. It is this assumption that was at the core of the Protestant ascendancy ideology. He repeatedly claimed that the principles of the Roman Catholics were not the cause of the troublesomeness of their conduct; by the same token, there were many examples of equal troublesomeness by English Protestants. He instanced the intolerance of the British government, referring to the American Revolution and the penal laws in Ireland:

"With what malignity would he [a Roman Catholic] exult in exhibiting the attempts, that free and Protestant state, the patroness of liberty, and mother of toleration; made to fix the galling shackles of slavery and on three millions of free men -free by all the laws of nature and reason- and free even upon the principle that was used to oppress them -their participation of the British constitution- ... How would he dwell on that wretched system of politics that ended in the alienation of America from Britain!".

In the latter half of his tract, Grace blamed Woodward for breaking that union. In his view, Woodward made a great fuss about nothing, by warning the Protestants of a danger of persecution of the established Church which actually did not exist; to terrify Protestants into supporting the Riot Bill and strengthening the case for the terms of the new statutory provisions for police.

36 George Grace, A short plea for human nature and common sense in which it is attempted to state a few general principles for the direction of our judgment of the present state of the Church of Ireland, as described by the lord bishop of Cloyne (Dublin, 1787), p.4f..

37 Ibid., p.19f.,
On the other hand, Woodward failed to give "the most distant hint of the greater persecutions suffered by the Roman Catholic clergy, from the people of their own communion - for that would be justice". He also identified Woodward's willingness to rely on the power of Britain, to increase the power of the Crown, and to hand over the independence of the Irish nation to it in order to secure the Protestant constitution, saying ironically:

He should, from principle, be attached to the dependence of Ireland on the power of Britain, and he should prove this by an anxious and constant discrimination between the legislature of that country, and the government of this. He should be patronised by a courtier of great political influence, and a staunch friend to a national police.

Reference to "a courtier of great political influence" hints at the close connection between the bishop of Cloyne and Lord Shannon: to borrow Grace's phrase, "the interests of religion had been subjected to all the mischievous machinations of selfish policy". Not only Grace, but several other pamphleteers, referred to this connection; some of them attributed the Munster disturbances to the overwhelming involvement of clergymen of the Established Church in support of the Shannon interest. Before the tithe dispute, the Protestant camp had already fissured. It was the increasing strength of liberal opinion on the Protestant side which made Woodward and Duigenan aware of the need for defence of the Protestant constitution.

3.3 Protestant Conservatism

The campaign by conservative Protestants was also brought about by a change of the political situation in the county of Cork. Since the General Election of 1783, there had been a political power struggle. As the Dublin Evening Post reported, "the struggle lay between aristocratic factions rather than classes". However, because one of those factions was led by Lord Shannon, the strongest supporter of the Protestant constitution, it served as a stimulus to radicalisation of the liberal Protestants. In the General Election, a decline in the influence of Shannon's faction in the county had become evident. Townshend, the nominee of Shannon, lost his seat. He was defeated by Kingsborough, who shifted his constituency from his family borough of Boyle, County Roscommon to County Cork, by "placing himself at the head of the more radical Volunteers corps". This turn of the tide was welcomed by the newspapers, which regarded it as "a victory for reform". The Dublin Evening

38 Ibid., p.44.
39 Ibid., p.43.
40 Ibid., p.48.
41 D.E.P., 7 Oct. 1783.
Post, seeing it as the “great contest ... between Lord Kingsborough and Mr Townshend; or in fact, rather between the Independent and Shannon Parties”, commented:

Until those worthy men [i.e. Lord Kingsborough’s faction] started up, we remained the contempt of our fellow countrymen, and groaned, unpitied, under the ambitious yoke of tyrannical nobility. ... Thus enlightened, we beheld the irreligious impropriety of inverting religion into a bugbear. 

A letter from Woodward to Buckinghamshire lamented the result of the election. Woodward saw the defeat as caused by Richard Longfield, uncle of Arthur O’Connor - a future leader of the United Irishmen -, who was elected in Cork city. Longfield had broken off a connection with Shannon before the election. Woodward saw him as “monstrously ungrateful”, as if he were a betrayer. Moreover, as he observed that “Lord Shannon’s general interest is nearly overset by the democratical spirit now prevailing”, it is not surprising that he was so sensitive to the democratic or liberal undertones of the movement in 1786. 

Under the apprehension that “[i]f the Bishop of Derry mends the State and Lord Charlemont the Church, our Constitution will soon be a curious one”, he declared: “I am content with the present with all its faults, and hope Government will resist any further innovation”. 

In spite of Woodward’s fear, in practice, Longfield himself did not take such a liberal line, rather he competed with Shannon for power and influence, making use of his large property interest. There is an irony, however, in the fact that his nephew, O’Connor, was to denounce the corrupted system and break with his uncle in the 1790s.

Duigenan was the extreme opponent of the tide of liberalisation inside the Protestant establishment. His pamphlet, published in the autumn of 1786, was more a warning to the liberal Protestants, than an attack on the Catholic activists. As I have mentioned above, although he fell into O’Driscoll’s trap, he confessed that the doctrine which O’Driscoll stated in his manifesto “would be agreeable to all such Protestants, or others, as wished for a Republican Form of Government”; and “who perhaps would not at first consider that any Democratical Form of Government in Ireland must necessarily be a Popish Government in Ireland”. 

For that reason he warned that “the electors are the People at large, that is, the Papists of this kingdom, who ... compose the Mass of the people”. 

He repeated the latter phrase for emphasis. As a result, he became oversensitive on the question of election. He asserted the predominance of hereditary succession of the Crown over election, although he

\[D.E.P., 7 Oct. 1783.\]
\[H. M. C., Lothian paper, p.419f.; cited in Maurice R. O'Connell, ibid., p.368.\]
\[H. M. C., Lothian paper, p.420.\]
\[Duigenan, ibid., p.20.\]
accepted that the authority of the crown was limited by the Supreme Authority of the State.

Fuller discussion of the question of hereditary succession will be presented in the next chapter. Here, attention shall be confined to the logic adopted by the conservatives in the cause of the Protestant constitution. Woodward’s connection as a step-son of Josiah Tucker is interesting. Tucker’s criticism of the Lockean principles had led him to refute Molyneux, whose political thought was supported by liberal Irish Protestant gentry. His interest in the Irish question had been increasing in the 1780s.

“All Liberty may be considered in two Views, Civil, or Religious: Religious Liberty, otherwise called Liberty of Conscience”, he says in Commerce and Taxes, and observed that everyone should enjoy religious liberty, but that civil liberty should not be deduced from the unalienable birthright. Tucker objected to Molyneux in his A treatise concerning civil government, asserting that Molyneux was applying Locke’s mistaken principles. Tucker tried to persuade the liberal Irish Protestant to realise the risk of destroying the Protestant constitution if the Lockean principles were adopted in Ireland. He asserted that the conclusion deduced from those principles lets the Papists claim their rights to “shake off the Protestant Yoke, and to assert their native Independence, and unalienable Birth-right”. His argument was close to that of Duigenan mentioned above. Although Tucker and other conservatives openly opposed Catholic enfranchisement, it was not religious sentiment which motivated them. Instead, their chief concern was the defence of the British empire against France. They assumed that the lack of industries and military force would made Ireland incapable of preserving its independence; the Catholic majority would sooner or later find economic and military assistance in France; then, Ireland would turn into a serious threat to Britain. Their awareness of the actual impossibility of independence led them to embrace conservatism, which they saw as more advantageous to Ireland. One of the Earl of Buckinghamshire’s letters to Woodward, written in the constitutional crisis of 1782, clearly shows this view. It says:

[Let your patriots indulge what flattering day dreams they may, experience will fully prove that independence cannot be maintained with a most limited revenue, or unrestrained commerce asserted without a frigate. Can they suppose that when they got rid of the remaining phantom of English shackles (it is no more) and that the triumphant fleet of the House of Bourbon sails unmolested through either channel, that the Western Ports of Ireland


Ibid., p.408.
will be permitted to meet the trade of French America, or that the infant fishery which it was my cordial wish to cherish can either be carry'd to material effect with exclusive advantage to their countrymen? 50

Although I call those who held imperialistic constitutionalist views “conservatives” for convenience of classification, their view was not highly “conservative” in terms of the political economy in those days. For instance, even Paine, although he changed the term “government” to “kingdoms” in the later editions of Common Sense, initially wrote: “Small islands not capable of protecting themselves, are the proper objects for government [i.e. British government] to take under their care”. 51

Tucker’s justification of the established constitution was based on expediency and conventionalism. That is to say, the extent to which the public good was improved was the prime criterion for evaluation and justification of the constitution. In this way, he made the case for the system of monopoly and influence, which others denounced as corruption which had been established since the revolution of 1688, not on the basis of the civil contract, but of successful promotion of the public good and national wealth. Dr Woodward also adopted the same logic, when he justified his church as established by law and enjoying a constitutional right to tithes. As, according to his views, “the protestant episcopacy suits limited monarchies” and the established church supported the spirit of constitution by instructing people, the tithes were a kind of wage of the priests of the established church for their public service.

However, his pamphlet provoked not only liberal Protestants, but members of two other sects. In their eyes, Woodward’s argument legitimatizing the church on the basis of authority was so ridiculous as to look like one advanced by Don Quixote. Many opponents pointed out that his understanding of the status quo was itself wrong; and raised the question: even judging it on the basis of his standpoint, what public good had been promoted by the established Church while many disturbances had broken out due to its tithes. Contrary to Woodward's intention, his pamphlet enlarged the controversy and moved the point at issue to an argument about the necessity of a Protestant constitution. Especially, after some Presbyterian pamphleteers took part in the controversy, their arguments went beyond political economy and turned to civil and ecclesiastical polity.

In spite of the opposition from liberal Protestants and the Presbyterians, Woodward did not lack supporters, especially among the Protestant intelligentsia, who held office in Trinity College, and who, foreseeing a tide of support for separation of church and state in enlightened political thought,

50 H.M.C., Lothian paper, p.413.
51 Thomas Paine, “Common Sense”, p.86.
attempted to put a convincing construction on the Protestant constitution. Duigenan himself was of course a fellow of TCD, and a hard liner. Another fellow of TCD, Robert Burrowes, argued:

In this period of time, many new nations have arisen, many revolutions of government, many changes in the state of opinions and history of mankind have taken place, yet the art of supporting the cause of religion without establishment, was reserved for modern improvers to discover. 52

His argument for the ecclesiastical establishment was, however, merely tentative and “half-baked”. Indeed he seemingly accepted the human right of private judgment, but still claimed that there is a need for some supervision by public authority because of the fallibility of mankind: that is to say, people may “establish a mode of faith absurd or impious”; in such a case, a need for interference by authority should be acknowledged. 53 This argument shows his shallow understanding of human rights as well as his premodern view of society, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it was a consequence of the gap between two different principles of formation of social order. For him the convention of authority was accepted, therefore he omits to ask the very question: what is the authority, or who authorises it in public. Liberal and enlightened people threw doubt on the very authority, and re-defined it as consensus of opinion.

Unlike Duigenan and Burrowes, Joseph Stock, the third fellow of TCD to join in the controversy, covered Woodward from the attack of the Presbyterian camp, by developing Tucker’s line of thinking, namely the expediency of protecting the church in terms of political economy. In reply to Campbell’s attack on Woodward, Stock maintained that Woodward’s emphasis was on the importance of the connection with Britain, quoting from his passage: “the preservation of that ascendancy depends entirely on an indissoluble connexion between the sister-kingdoms”. 54 He understood that the established church was an essential element of stabilization of the British constitution; therefore, for securing the privileges of members of the empire, it was beneficial even for Dissenters to line up behind the Church of Ireland, even if in their hearts they were not friendly to it. Such a view is underlined by the following remarks: “things are so constituted, that you can not ... desert the national church without deserting the state also; without imminent hazard of losing all the

52 Robert Burrowes, A letter to the Rev. Samuel Barber, minister of the presbyterian congregation of Rathfriland, containing a refutation of certain dangerous doctrines advanced in his Remarks on the bishop of Cloyne’s Present state of the Church of Ireland (Dublin, 1787), p.10.

53 Ibid., p.16.

54 Joseph Stock, A reply to the rev Dr Campbell’s vindication of the principles and character of the Presbyterians of Ireland, in which the question is discussed whether our political constitution might be improved by substituting in place of the present ecclesiastical establishment of England and Ireland either the Presbyterian or independent model of church polity (Dublin, 1787), p.8.
vaunted privileges you enjoy as subjects of the British empire”. His way of thinking was purely pragmatic and expedient:

We enjoy as ample a measure of the blessings of equal rule as the nature of man will admit, in connection with a people more numerous, more industrious, and consequently stronger than ourselves. The great bond of union between the two countries of England and Ireland is the exact conformity of their establishment in church and state.

Stock's view of polity rested on realism and prudence. After pointing out that there had never been a civil polity so perfect that it encountered no objection or complaint, he continued:

Where the great end for which men submit to civil restraint is secured, protection of property, it is wisdom to acquiesce under inconveniences comparatively small: and the folly of attempting to remove inferior mischiefs rises in proportion to the improbability of succeeding in the attempt.

This remark reminds us of Tucker's view that the corrupt politics of Walpole government were nonetheless admirable, because they resulted in a peaceful increase of wealth. This utilitarian and expedient principle was adopted by Stock, and used for defence of the established order against a new wave of liberalism. On the other hand, unlike the Presbyterians, the Protestant liberals at that time also judged and criticised the status quo not only from a moral but also an utilitarian standpoint. The conservatives' belief in British freedom turned into an illusion, in the eyes of the liberals: especially, in Ireland under the Penal laws, the limits of such freedom were obvious, and corruption inside the administration conferred not benefit, but only an ineffective policy and mass wretchedness. These very bad consequences led liberals to realise the urgent need of alteration in the constitutional system. Hence, although the principle of expediency was the same as those conservative pamphleteers', it was turned into a sharp criticism of the conventional political system in the arguments by liberals.

3.4 Democracy in Presbyterian Classical Republicanism

There was fundamental difference between liberal Protestants' perspective and that of Presbyterians. Presbyterian writers were unable to understand liberal Protestants' utilitarian and expedient perspective. For them, the arguments on expedient principle seemed inconsistent and unconvincing, because their own standpoint was overwhelmingly civic humanism, which saw mutual communal rights and duties as primary elements of society. The Presbyterians' pamphlets illustrates this point, especially William Campbell’s

55 Ibid., p.11.
56 Ibid., p.13.
57 Ibid., p.12f..
and Samuel Barber's. Campbell changed the main point of the dispute from the loyalty of Roman Catholics to the legitimacy of the present ecclesiastical polity. His argument was rather limited to a claim of equality between the established church and the Presbyterians in terms of civil rights, but the overstrung response of Stock directed the controversy towards the constitution. Barber, who was to be a leading United Irishman, discussed how legitimate civil and ecclesiastical polity should be established. In that case, he unconsciously rejects conventionalism, and naturally respected the supremacy of the people's consensus, which to him was the common sense in Barber's daily environment inside the Presbyterian community. His clear expression of the democratic principle stimulated liberal and democratic opinion leaders in other denominations. They re-examined whether the established church and its tithes were public, and for them, this question was tantamount to asking whether they are endorsed by a consensus of opinion. In their arguments the very word "public" was transformed and came to assume a democratic implication of mass consent.

Campbell refuted Woodward on the basis of secularism, saying: "the only utility of ecclesiastical establishments that you have pointed out, is not of political, but of a religious or moral kind". He argued that such moral and civic instruction was the charge not exclusively of the established church, but equally of the Presbyterian ministers; therefore, there was no need for either the established church or its political ascendancy. Furthermore, seeing such political power not as essential, but rather as dangerous to the "civil" constitution, he remarked:

Here, then, is a testimony as unexceptionable as can well be given by human wisdom, that the ecclesiastical hierarchy is, in its constitution and natural course of operation, dangerous to the liberty and legal government of Britain, but extremely friendly to kingly domination, and arbitrary power.

This comment shows his modern notion of the civil polity, which should consist purely of laws and their executive power. For him, the conventional power of the established church was only a legacy which had served mostly the aristocratic side of the British constitution. He remarked that it was courts of law and a well-regulated military force which were essential to the civil constitution. Campbell himself did not have a profound awareness of the difference between the civil and the aristocratic, but his argument suggests a key point of his disagreement with Woodward about the understanding of the British constitution.

58 William Campbell, A vindication of the principles and character of the Presbyterians of Ireland, addressed to the bishop of Cloyne in answer to his book entitled, The present state of the Church of Ireland (Dublin, 1787), p.6.
59 Ibid., p.37.
60 Ibid., p.41.
In keeping with his view on the civil constitution, Campbell vindicated the Presbyterians’ civil rights on an equal footing with Episcopalians. He asserted that, on a promise to Presbyterians of freedom of religion and equal civil rights with the Episcopalians, the British government had encouraged their Ulster settlement; therefore, Woodward’s understanding that the Irish constitution was exclusively Episcopalian distorted the historical facts. Opposing Woodward’s appeal to Presbyterians to make common cause with Episcopalians for the improvement of their situation, he declared that Presbyterians had been indebted to the actual constitution not for its Protestant characteristic but for its securing religious freedom; it should be not a religious coalition against Catholics but the good policy of government which would improve the status of Presbyterians. 

Stock’s zealous attack on Campbell’s pamphlet sprung from the impatience of the conservative Protestant. Stock’s “belief” in the Protestant constitution and its ascendancy led him to a complete misreading of the pamphlet. Campbell had used the historical precedent of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland as the established church within Scotland to oppose the idea that Anglican ascendancy in Ireland was necessary for Ireland’s connection with Britain, and was essential to the constitution. In the eyes of Stock, however, he seemed to advocate a conversion of the established churches both of Ireland and England into a Presbyterian one like the Church of Scotland. Stock, not understanding Campbell’s secularistic argument, expressed a conventional assumption: “since church and state are thus interwoven together, all good subjects, support the whole of our happy constitutions, as they hope to retain the enjoyment of one part of it”.

While Campbell, one of the main Presbyterian participants in the dispute, confined his argument to a vindication of Presbyterian principles, Barber argued beyond the range of Presbyterian interests, in favour of the general emancipation of the Roman Catholics, the reform of the actual tithe system, and the promotion of public enlightenment. Although Barber’s pamphlet and Campbell’s alike were written in order to refute Woodward, there is a noteworthy difference which enables us to distinguish participatory democracy from liberal constitutionalism.

Barber, pointing out the fundamental difference between religious laws and the civil constitution, declared: “the christian system cannot be formed according to the genius of the civil constitution”. Emphasising this difference, he criticised Woodward for impairing the dignity of Christianity and the spiritual

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81 Ibid., p.70.
83 Samuel Barber, Remarks on a pamphlet entitled The present state of the Church of Ireland by Richard, lord bishop of Cloyne (Dublin, 1787), p.9.
world, because Woodward treated it as a tool of politics by asserting the union between church and state. He remarked that if a legislator meddles with a kingdom where he has no power, the whole object of his province “is to decree rites and ceremonies, and to chain down the soul to certain system of opinions”. In this way, he refuted Woodward from the standpoint of respect for spiritual freedom, and claimed that religion should be treated as a personal matter, free from the control of the civil power. Barber’s emphasis on the limit of civil power gave new common ground to the liberals of all sects, while Campbell’s argument still implied a kind of sectarian gap. When Campbell claimed the civil rights which the British government allowed to the Presbyterian emigrants, the ground of his claim was their conventional and hereditary rights as British citizens. Despite his liberalist tendency, he was still limited to maintaining his own sect’s civil rights and interests. On the other hand, Barber, discussing the limited power of civil laws over personal matters as man-made law, made room for personal freedom, that is to say, a sphere of natural human rights where only divine laws had influence. From this standpoint, Barber criticised the present laws in Ireland, protesting against Woodward who justified the tithes system by reason of its legitimacy, and ironically asked “what evils have not been committed under colour of law”? Then, pointing out the evils: confinement of legal benefit to only a part of the people, legitimate tyranny of a certain sect over others, confiscation of property and misapplication of it and so on, he declared that such a law “is no longer a law, but a grievance ... It is not the will of the community, and where there are laws of that kind, the state can not free; for in every free state, the laws must be the will of the majority”. This statement shows his democratic tendency coming from the classical republican tradition in Presbyterian communities. The principle that the law should be the will of majority in a community, which meant regionalistic nationalism and representative democracy, was to be the common ground of liberals. Although this principle has turned into a cliché of democracy in the present day, once we think of his situation as a member of a religious minority of Scottish origin, it leads onto the question as what led him to have such a view. Indeed, the advocacy of democracy in Ireland entailed recognition of the very fact that the majority was Catholic, a realisation which haunted most Protestants. What led Barber to call for democracy was not only his egalitarian cast, but also his view and design of society.

His notion of polity and society shows a sharp contrast with the conservative Protestant pamphleteers referred to above. First, the pamphleteers saw Ireland as “a state”, in the sense of a single and monolithic

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64 Ibid., p.11.
65 Ibid., p.31.
66 Ibid., p.35.
political unit. As a result, they left the cultural and religious diversity of Irish society out of account, except for taking it up as a cause of frictions, treating it only as an unbearable and annoying difference which should be erased by political power. They sought to homogenise society, by means of the general requirements of the constitution, and at the same time, to fit society to the constitution which they saw as desirable, because, according to their constitutionalism, society cannot be established without the form and order of a constitution; society should be an accurate reflection of a constitution. Their assumption that ecclesiastical polity was essential to a constitution also stems from this.

On the other hand, for Barber, an initial image of society was not the whole state, but the parish community. Therefore, he assumed that community-society implies its own order, culture, and religion; the common will of the community is the primary ground of civil law, and the reverse is not true; community-society is formed on its own without any civil law or constitution, therefore independent of government and state. He considered states or kingdoms as only a federation of regional communities for the sake of common benefit, like America. In this viewpoint, civil law which is enacted by the state should contain the limitation that it should not violate the freedom of each community and person. This view formed the basis of regionalistic nationalism, which had also been manifested in Paine’s argument in the opening paragraph of Common Sense about a distinction between society and government.

Further, Barber expanded this argument into Catholic emancipation. He was not afraid to touch on the question of the forfeited property of the Catholics. He pointed out that the present unjust laws against them induced them to want to regain their inheritance the claim to which had descended from father to son for generations: “It not only robbed him [i.e. a Catholic] of his property, but hurled defiance at him, and persecuted him for his religion”. Barber, sympathising with Catholics in their unjust treatment, added his comment that even he, out of human sentiment of indignation, would remember his forfeited estates, if he had been put in such a humiliating situation.  

The last part of this comment seems to refer to the happening in 1786 when an antiquarian map of the former territories of the Gaelic septs supposedly terrified the Protestants who lived in continual fear that the Catholics might have arranged for the restoration of their forfeited lands. It is likely that some Protestants deliberately stirred up this fear among the Presbyterians, in order to bring them over to Protestants’ side. Barber perceived such an intention, and exhorted both Catholics and Presbyterians to

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67 Ibid., p.34.
68 Elliott, Partners..., p.7.
get on with each other, by directing them towards the real and common enemy. Seeing the British government and its supporters in the ruling class as responsible for their suffering and friction, he declared what their common enemy was. Strongly refuting Woodward's suggestion, he said: "The trick of setting the Roman Catholicks and Protestant Dissenters by the ears, that the establishment may receive tithes from both, is too stale to produce any effect. Protestant dissenters have no fears of the Roman Catholicks".

Moreover, Barber criticised Woodward's historiographical claim that Presbyterians were a conquered people, and had as such submitted to a disgraceful situation. He claimed that Presbyterians were not conquered, but compelled to conquer Catholics by the Episcopalian government; however finally they were put in the same situation as Catholics. His sympathy for the Catholics, in the same servitude to ruling Episcopalians, and his sentiment of indignation is fully expressed in the following passage:

[T]hey [i.e. Presbyterians] fought at their [i.e. Episcopalians'] side and conquered with them:. . . they planted, civilised and improved the province of Ulster, and while they were doing so forged their own chains, which in time became so firmly riveted, that to get rid of them, they were obliged in great numbers to abandon that very country, they had made a comfortable habituation. ... They assisted in conquering the Roman Catholicks, and were reduced to the same servitude.

Barber, in common with other liberals, attributed the disturbances to discontent over the exaction of tithes among the lower people. Against Woodward's accusations of sedition, with irony he said that it was his established church itself which brought them such distresses.

Then, concerning tithes, Barber refuted Woodward's view that tithe should not be treated as property but as wages. Barber observed, referring to the education of the nation:

The business therefore of the established clergy is, to instruct the eighth of the nation in the principles of morality and religion. Pray, my Lord, what value do the seven-eighth of the people receive for the wages they pay?

From Barber's standpoint, even if they did their business, they would exceed their authority. In his view, incumbents can be authorised only by each parish community to receive tithe and to provide moral and religious instruction. Furthermore, in economic terms, he referred to the harmful effects of tithe. Quoting Adam Smith, he observed that "Tithes discourage agriculture, the true force of wealth of nation"; because, "the more a man labours, the more he pays ...". This is an especially noteworthy contrast with the liberal Protestant

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69 Barber, ibid., p.41f.
70 Ibid., p.36f.
71 Ibid., p.56.
72 Ibid., p.31.
73 Ibid., p.45.
pamphleteers mentioned above. Whereas their subject-matter was not tithe itself, but the actual tithe system, Barber questioned tithe itself.

In addition to this, while the liberal Protestants emphasised that the ecclesiastical establishment was necessary for public welfare, specifically education and help for the poor, Barber commented that there was no need exclusively for the Episcopal church to be responsible for their provision; and that they indeed had not done so. He criticised Woodward’s excuse that his church did not get a sufficient amount of tithe to educate people. Irritated with Woodward’s irresponsibility, he said: “you ... boast that seven eights are kept in profound ignorance, and excluded from the means of education”. Then, he advocated establishing public education by the legislature for enlightenment of the nation, in order to “break down every wall of partition, that separated different nations”. He remarked:

To make a monopoly of the sciences, is really carrying things with a high hand, and is among the blessed fruits of establishment. But the legislature, we trust, will in a few weeks, remedy this evil, and provide some funds for establishing a seminary or seminaries for the education of the majority of this kingdom .... 74

This argument on education and enlightenment clearly shows Barber’s democratic and radical design to break through into a new public sphere which should grant to each person freedom of private judgment, including that of religion and speech.

After the issue of his first pamphlet, Barber was contradicted principally by two Protestant figures: Robert Burrowes, fellow of TCD, and Edward Ryan, prebendary of St Patrick’s. Barber replied with his second pamphlet. 75 The main points of their dispute related to the necessity of the established church and respect for private judgment. In reply to Burrowes, Barber claimed that religion is a matter of conscience; therefore the legislature in parliament must not interfere in decision making by the people; “if they will establish a religion, let it be that of the people”. 76 His respect for the right of private judgment by people raised the question of the sound judgment of the masses. Ryan had put the question as follows: “It is dangerous to preach such doctrines to the mass of mankind, ... what madness then to preach to ignorant individuals the right of judging for themselves on the subjects to which they are totally strangers”. 77 Barber countered him with bitter irony. He commented that Ryan’s notion of the ignorant masses led him only to a “dreadful alternative” either of their becoming the rebels and fanatics who indulged their fancies, or else remaining

74 Ibid., p.47.
75 Robert Burrowes, ibid.; Edward Ryan, Remarks on the pamphlet of Mr Barber, dissenting minister of Rathfriland (Dublin, 1787).
76 Samuel Barber, A reply to the reverend Mr Burrowes’s and the reverend Mr Ryan’s remarks (Dublin, 1787), p.13.
77 Edward Ryan, ibid., p.17; Barber, ibid., p.21.
slaves and dupes.

Such is an outline of a Presbyterian point of view. Here, the issue of mass participation in the public sphere lay behind the Catholic question. For people either for or against Catholic emancipation, except for the supporters of Protestant ascendancy, the first item on the agenda was the readiness and competence of the masses, mostly Catholic, to become civilised citizens. That is to say, at least in the liberal Presbyterian camp, the main point began to change from the static issue of the loyalty of Catholics to one of their capability of becoming political subjects, which, in the sense of Presbyterian democracy, meant the ability to claim and exert their own rights. However, although those who favoured Catholic emancipation expected Catholics to launch an attack against the existing tithe system and the Protestant constitution, Catholic leaders did not make public common cause with them.

3.5 Lack of Catholic Emancipatory Theory

Compared with the pamphleteers of the other two sects, the Catholics lacked an ideology of their own during the tithe dispute. Their flimsy ideological foundation accounted for their hesitant or indecisive reaction. This may be seen from two Catholic pamphleteers, James Butler, archbishop of Cashel, and Edward Sheridan, a medical doctor in the Diocese of Meath.

Soon after Woodward’s pamphlet was published, Dr James Butler prepared a pamphlet for the vindication of Roman Catholic tenets. Although this pamphlet is notable as the opinion of a senior Catholic clergyman on the tithe dispute, in comparison with the responses of Presbyterian and the liberal Protestants, it was in a traditional framework. Its emphasis was mainly placed on the loyalty of the Roman Catholics to the British administration: that is, it saw no contradiction between their acceptance of Papal authority and their loyalty to the kingdom. Furthermore, emphasising that the Roman Catholic clergy never objected to the tithe system itself, he said: “everything was conducted with great appearance of respect for the ecclesiastical establishment, and a dislike only of the abuses, that were practiced in collecting the church revenues”.  

However, it is not so surprising, given the Munster disturbances, that Dr Butler was so much on the defensive. In 1786, when the White boys movement was at its height, the White boys were beyond the control of the Catholic church, and the clerical attempt to assert influence over them was a central theme in the events of the year. Rather, as did Arthur O’Leary, the Catholic

—James Butler, A justification of the tenets of the Roman Catholic religion and a refutation of the charges brought against its clergy by the right reverend the lord bishop of Cloyne (Dublin, 1787), p.20.
priests made efforts to restrain their parishioners from resort to violence. For instance, in August of 1786, an exhortation written by John Troy, the bishop of Ossory, was read after Mass in the chapels in Kilkenny. It described the White boys as “the wrong-headed and misguided wretches” and declared:

[If, instead of applying to the justice and humanity of their rulers, they shall obstinately persevere in their fruitless endeavours to intimidate them, by tumultuous meetings, by tendering unjust oaths, and other unlawful proceedings, they may be assured, that, in place of obtaining redress, they will experience the indignation of Heaven, the censures of the Church and the extreme rigour of violated laws.]

In spite of these efforts, as the newspapers show, Whiteboy-outrages were not quelled, and they even threatened some Catholic clergymen for their zealous admonitions against the White boys.

Despite these circumstances, the Catholic church itself was attacked by conservative Protestants like Woodward and Duigenan. They attributed the White boys disturbance to the very tenets of Catholics. Naturally most Catholic clergymen disliked the awkward situation in which they were put, and responded by clearing themselves of the charge. In one sense, the humble and supplicant statements of Butler and his limited argument in his pamphlet implicitly convey the distance of a man of this property background from a movement in the lower class. As Maurice Bric points out, Butler was increasingly estranged from the public at that time, because he sought a new respectability and reputation for the Catholic clergymen so that the Protestant gentlemen would recognise them.

However, Butler had one highly interesting point. He blamed the disturbances on the involvement of Protestant clergymen in the politics of County Cork. He stated that the cause of the southern risings was that “all or most of the clergy of the established church, voted in support of what has been termed in that country a despotic faction ... It has been too much the practice in politics of the world to make religion subservient to them”. This statement shows that the real confrontation in the tithe dispute of 1786-88 was between political factions rather than religious ones, namely the conservative supporters of the Lord Shannon and his opponents including liberal Protestants. As mentioned above, the undercurrent of opposition had already emerged in the early 1780s.

In theoretical and ideological terms, however, there is nothing new in Butler’s argument. It assumes less the tone of an assertive claim, than of a

81 James Butler, ibid., p.19.
vindication. Compared with Butler, another Catholic writer, Edward Sheridan was more assertive, although his argument itself was neither original nor impressive; and he failed to grasp the gist of Barber’s claims. He supported Barber, because he understood that Barber maintained the principle that “the state religion is the religion of the great body of the people, and therefore alters the plea of partial evil for universal good”. What this passage makes clear at once is how it is different from the points actually emphasised by Barber. Sheridan seizes on the principle of decision-making by the majority for the establishment of national religion. He does not realise that such a principle from the Catholic side must appear as unqualifiedly sectarian if viewed from the standpoint of other denominations. By the same token, Sheridan criticised Campbell for his religious bigotry:

The only bigotry that now subsists, and will probably long subsist, because supported by fear, which flies from discussion, takes its rise in the misrepresentation and falsification of wicked, designing and self-interested men. Such men practice on the credulity and ignorance of mankind. They represent, to a favoured sect, all those of a different creed as hostile in political concerns; and thus recommend restraints and legal incapacities as salutary and necessary.

However, while the issue is discussed in a religious guise, it does advert to the question of mass participation in the public sphere. In this way, a liberal Catholic like Sheridan touches on a basic question of enlightenment and civilisation. Sheridan’s background itself is instructive. He was a relative of the Catholic bishop Patrick Joseph Plunket, one of the most important figures advocating an education system, and renowned for his zealous endeavours to instruct the younger people in his Diocese of Meath. Sheridan kept up a regular correspondence with Plunket. Afterwards, Theobald Wolfe Tone was deeply moved by Plunket’s conduct, and expressed his admiration for him: “More and more admire Dr Plunket; glad to find the Catholic prelates men of such manners and understanding”. In another part of his journal, Tone again referred to Plunket: “Plunket doing his business like a ‘man’”. With all its narrowness, there was in this contact a clear undercurrent moving in the direction of the ideas of the United Irishmen.

Although the tithe problem was not a chief subject of the first organisation of the United Irishmen, the progress of mass organisation in the North after the middle of 1793 was to raise it again. In the House of Commons in May 1795, Arthur O’Connor, criticising the Church-State connection in the existing

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82 An unbiassed Irishman [i.e. Edward Sheridan], A critical review of the b. of Cloyne’s publication, with occasional remarks on the production of some other writers, particularly those of Trinity College, and on the conduct of the present ministry, addressed to his lordship (Dublin,1787), p.43.

83 Ibid., p.72.

constitution, referred to the tithe question. On behalf of the lower class, he denounced the tithe system as destructive of agriculture, and sowing "the seeds of eternal rancour". Furthermore, intent on linking mass grievance against the tithe system with the anti-monopoly cause, he declared that the system had served merely the religious interests of the clergy, whose dignitaries had a strong connection with a few monopolising families; therefore, the tithe system was instituted "for no other purpose than to provide exorbitantly for the families and connections of the political jobbers". In this context, the tithe problem could be used as a stimulus in drawing the masses to the movement.

Chapter 4: REVEALED CONTRADICTION IN IMPERIALISTIC CONSTITUTIONALISM: THE REGENCY CRISIS 1788-89

After the question of Regency, that memorable display of the infamy and principles of the factions of Ireland, some of the most considerable of them were forced into IRISH PARLIAMENTARY PATRIOTISM, by being stript [sic] of the wages of their prostitution.

Arthur O'Connor

[T]his latter body was known by the name of RATS, from a familiar allusion to the known and prudent instinct of those animals, in quitting a falling house or a sinking ship, and much was expected from the desperate valour of those deserters, who, on the rules of war, could never expect quarters.

Dominick Trant

4.0 The Emergence of a Constitutional Question out of the Tithe Dispute

The tithe dispute as mentioned in the previous chapter gradually turned into a constitutional one after 1788. Campbell responded to Woodward and Stock with his second pamphlet. Then, Arthur Browne, a regius professor of Law of TCD, published his A brief review of the question whether the Articles of Limerick have been violated?, giving serious offence to both the Presbyterian and the Catholic camps. This led Sheridan to issue a pseudonymous pamphlet which attacked Browne and Campbell, in vindication of Catholics. One of the critical points of the controversy was the status of the Crown of Ireland in reference to the British one. On what footing did King William receive the Irish Crown: on an equal basis, or not? Both supporters and opponents of the Protestant constitution used the notion of the Irish Crown for their justification, interpreting its status to favour their argument. In this way, a constitutional controversy, with highly ideological implications, took shape.

From the beginning of the tithe dispute to 1788, the Irish parliament evaded regarding it as a constitutional issue although it was becoming one in the line of argument pursued by the pamphlets. The vote of the House of Commons on the riots bill in the winter of 1787 shows that the majority of MPs were deeply conservative. The motion on appointing a committee to look into the real causes of Munster disturbances and the complaints about the actual tithe system, which Henry Grattan moved in the House of Commons in February of 1788, was rejected by 121 votes to 49. Despite this overwhelming majority, the poor quality of argument by the conservatives in favour of the Protestant

1 The second Address to the free electors of the County of Antrim; the second letter (Belfast, 1797).

2 Dominick Trant, Observations on the late proceedings in the parliament of Ireland, in the question of a regency for that Kingdom (Dublin, 1789), p.48.
constitution in the parliamentary debate shows us that rejection can be seen more as an attempt to avoid confronting the uncomfortable underlying principles of the tithe controversy, rather than an unshaken conviction of the legitimacy of the Protestant constitution.

The accident of the King's unforeseen incapacity in November 1788, however, confronted MPs with the constitutional question, which they had avoided debating openly. The question as to how to empower the Prince of Wales to act as Regent, aroused constitutional controversies over the Crown of Ireland in two terms: one its position in the domestic political system, the other its relation to the British imperial Crown. In the early stage of the regency crisis, these questions were posed by the British Whigs, in highly theoretical mode. In Britain, William Pitt the younger, prime minister, planned to restrict the Regent's authority by depriving him of his competence to grant peerages, offices and pensions. Opposing this plan, Charles James Fox claimed that the restriction by Parliament would infringe the inherent rights of the Prince of Wales as heir to the throne. However, his claim caused an ideological rift within the Whigs themselves, who divided into two groupings: those who, like Burke, stressing the organic or hereditary character of the British polity as an institution, demanded recognition of the Prince's unrestricted authority; and others who, embracing a social contract theory and a principle of checks and balances of power, and regarding the Crown as a mere function of the governing system, stressed the urgent need of a substitute for the incapable King to maintain the existing system: this view was shared with Pitt.

This ideological complexity accounts for the vagueness of Whig thought. Originally, Whig thought, formed in confrontation with the increasing strength of the King and Court, claimed that the British constitution entitled the English parliament to resist the royal prerogative lawfully. By "the British constitution" they meant a system composed of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, which Montesquieu understood as the modern liberalist model of checks and balances of power. However, not all the so-called Country Whigs necessarily took the Lockean position that "the Constitution of the Legislative" is "depending wholly on the People". Even if the Whigs maintained the principles of people's rights in Parliament, their grounds and reasoning varied. Although they applied Lockean social contract theory to their justification of civil government, their main concern was the achievement of a systematic stability of balance of power, rather than the establishment of general human rights. Regarding the rights of people not as natural rights but as those of royal subjects, they favoured people's participation in the legislative power only to a limited extent, and less as a right than as a break on the power of the Court.

3 John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, p.373.
Not only for present-day historians, but for contemporary politicians, the Whig tradition remained hazy as to what precise principles were established in the English Revolution of 1688. As mentioned in the previous chapter, some people, including Tucker, saw the value of the Revolution in utilitarian fashion in the beneficial results it had on society. Others regarded it as a precedent for legitimation of government. Even the latter, however, were vague as to what government meant and what power was granted to the government and what was the role of the royal prerogative. The simple Whig tradition postulated by many historians did not exist.\(^4\) Bearers of a genuine Lockean notion of social contract were quite few. In theoretical terms, the ambiguity of the Whig tradition arose from attachment to two potentially conflicting concepts: hereditary power and delegated power. There was no theoretical possibility of joining them together perfectly, unless drawing on the doctrine of the divine right of kings that God entrusted or delegated his power to kings. Nevertheless there was some room for arrangement of those ideas, for the convenience of justifying Whig party policy. In the actual historical context, as Patrick Kelly points out, the ideas expressed in the language of Country Whigs, “assimilated political differences to the paradigm conflict of patriotism and corruption”.\(^5\)

In Ireland, the Regency Crisis raised wider questions, because the heredity of the Crown of Ireland and its relation to the Crown of England were part and parcel of the Protestant constitution, which happened already to be to the fore as an issue at that critical moment. However, conventional historiography has failed to grasp the following three points. First, within a dualistic framework, the event has been described as a “contest” between the administration and the patriotic opposition aligned with the British Whigs. This simplistic explanation has led us to overestimate the establishment of the Whig club on 26 June 1789 in the wake of the Regency dispute and the role of the patriotic opposition of Henry Grattan and others, and to underestimate or omit that of imperialistic constitutionalists, such as John Hely-Hutchinson and Sir Laurence Parsons, who regarded Irish politics as part of imperial politics. The latter sometimes, from a standpoint similar to John Fitzgibbon’s and John

\(^4\) See, for instance, John Wesley Derry, *Politics in the Age of Fox, Pitt and Liverpool* (Macmillan: Houdmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1990), p.70. He describes Pitt as “the more dependable custodian of the Whig constitution”, by which he means mainly a political system based on the balance of power between the rights of king, lords and commons, especially an administrative system responsible for both King and the Houses. However, this definition seems to fall short of the real range of the Whiggish ideas, whose main concern was the adjustment of different rights. When Derry also portrays Burke as “the sole custodian of the Whig tradition”, his definition of the Whig tradition is biased toward a conventionalist notion of the Whig, missing the germ of modern liberal politics. Furthermore, within his framework, the essential difference between Pitt and Burke might be overlooked.

Foster's - the most effective spokesmen of Dublin Castle - supported the administration. It was this imperialistic constitutionalism which became one of the most important source of liberal radicalism. This was not an organised group, though there were some close personal contacts among them. Secondly, the term "Whig" has been applied to the Irish context, without taking accounts of the ideological rift among the British Whigs, although the rift took shape after the regency crisis. At least the difference in understanding of the Crown between Burke and Fox should be noticed. When they defined their attitude towards the British monarchy and war with France in 1792, the Foxite Whigs, declaring themselves for the French principles: liberalism, egalitarianism, fraternalism, were to separate them from the conservative group. Irish liberal radicalism was to be formed under the significant influence of the radicalisation of Foxite Whigs, expecting their backup from the British side. On the other hand, Grattan was to align with the Portland Whigs. The germ of this future division between the moderates, who were confined to imperialistic constitutionalism, and the progressively radical elements of Irish political opponents, parliamentary and unparliamentary, in the 1790s, can be found in the debate on the Irish Regency.

Thirdly, arguments over the Regency Crisis in the Irish context revealed some differences between the Foxite Whigs and the patriotic opposition in the Irish parliament about their understanding of Anglo-Irish constitutional relations. The arguments of the patriotic opposition like Grattan, in terms of their awareness of integration of British empire and of their notion of monarchy, revealed some theoretical incompatibility with Fox's view. Despite many historians' emphasis on a Grattan-Fox connection in the Regency Crisis, it was a merely personal and occasional one, not one based on mutual agreement on principles and policy.

In theoretical terms, a structural contradiction in British constitutionalism accounts for the varied understandings of the Constitution. As the American Revolution had revealed, the mixed government of the British Constitution, although it could secure domestic freedom and justice within Britain, was not necessarily a desirable system for the general welfare in the whole empire. While the administration should take the responsibility for the "Common Wealth", it basically rested upon the British parliament. A strong representative element in the parliament, the Commons, tended to reflect domestic interests in Britain in its decision-making, because for MPs the interests of their constituency preceded others. From this it follows that the more representative democracy became, the more domestic became the interests pursued by the British parliament. Only the independence of the Crown from partial interests could support the ideal of British Common Wealth.
Hence, the notion of the Crown was used for securing equality among regions within the empire. It also camouflaged the actual domination by the British parliament over those regions outside Britain under the sovereignty of the Crown. However, the Regency Crisis revealed this contradiction.

4.1 The Regency Crisis in Britain: a Gap between Administration of the Empire and the Legislative Role of the British Parliament

The protracted exclusion of the British Whigs from the administration, as well as the vagueness of Whig principles, drove them to accept royal authority as hereditary, with the prospect of using their good connections with the Prince of Wales, when the situation presented a long awaited golden opportunity. When Fox received the news that the King had become incapable of exercising the royal prerogative, he expected that the Prince’s succession to regency or monarchy would enable his party to become the administration, because the Prince was a strong supporter of the Whigs. For this purpose, the Prince needed to be empowered to dismiss Pitt and his Cabinet. Pitt, on the other hand, planned to call a Council of Regency, which would have the role of authorising the Regency of the Prince, with the intent of limiting his power. For this reason, Fox without hesitation maintained the independence of the royal prerogative from Parliament, in order to enable the heir to the throne to succeed without limitation. As Gerard O’Brien describes this political situation,

In England the passing of power into the hands of the Whigs depended partly on the possible permanence of the king’s malady and partly on their success in gaining support at Westminster for their interpretation of the Prince’s succession rights. 6

However, in their own understanding and justification of the Regent’s right, the Whigs differed among themselves, and many controversies emerged. Burke, giving unexpected support to Fox, maintained the Prince’s “inherent” right as the heir to the throne to have full regal powers. In the eyes of the contemporary audience, their arguments were themselves inconsistent with the traditional Whig tendency which had advocated independence of the legislative power from the King. Regarding this point, Ann Kavanaugh observes:

The English political world witnessed the curious spectacle of the ‘Man of the People’, Fox, championing the prerogatives of the monarchy ... and William Pitt, the ministerialist, defending the rights of the people’s representatives in Parliament. The incongruity, not to mention the transparent self-interest of the Whig argument, badly damaged the party. 7

Fox’s unforeseen maintenance of the inherent right of the Prince of Wales to the

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regency in the Commons on 10 December 1788, has been treated as “a decisive blunder” caused by his eagerness for office in administration. Fox’s conduct was, however, less an accident or mistake, than an action stemming from a fundamental constitutional question which had been left untouched until then. Burke had already expressed his fear of the violation of the royal authority by the commonality in office, in his letter to Fox dated 24 November: “The great point is in my opinion not to let Ministers take the lead in the Settlement [on the regency]. They are men undoubtedly in legal Situations of Trust, to perform such functions as can be performed in Office, without resort to the Crown”.

Although Burke expected Fox to protect the inherent authority of the Crown, Fox totally differed with Burke in terms of his justification of the regent’s hereditary right. (See, Column [2] of Table 1 in Appendix, and all further references to the column numbers in Table 1 appear in parentheses in the text.) In the debate in the Commons on 12 December, using the idea of the social contract, Fox argued that royal power could be newly established with direct delegation from the people to the Prince, without the medium of Parliament ([5]). He said:

If that trust were abused essentially, the people of England might resume it without the parliament, as had been done in the case of the Revolution. The Regency was a trust, on behalf of the people, for which the prince was responsible, in like manner as his majesty and every monarch that ever sat upon the throne, were responsible for the due execution of their high office. Sovereignty was a trust depending on the natural liberties of mankind.

Furthermore, on 16 December, Fox, defining the different nature and character of the three estates in the parliament, stressed the importance of maintaining the independence of each in the composite constitution ([4]), and concluded that the project of restricting the original rights of the third estate by both Houses’ power, “would radically alter the government, and of consequence, overturn the constitution.”

The conviction and consistency of his argument is not the point in question, but the fact that his argument still remained within the framework of the social contract. This did not satisfy Burke at all. Burke approached the issues from a fundamentally different aspect, and derived hereditary rights from his philosophical and conventionalist understanding of the constitution, against the current of other Whigs who avoided referring to an inherent right and who, in their opposition to the argument advanced by Fox, emphasised the representative authority of Parliament. He did not hesitate to reaffirm the Prince’s inherent right. Burke was aware of his theoretical difference from the

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To Charles James Fox, 24 November 1788, in Burke’s correspondence, vol.5, p.428f.  
10 Ibid., p.422; P.H., vol. 27,p.765.
rest of the opposition in his understanding of the British constitution, before the
debate about the French Revolution began in Britain, and even before the
French Revolution occurred. While others regarded the regency issue as a
question of competence to restrict powers between the king and parliament,
Burke detected in their arguments a danger to hereditary rights at large. He
observed that, if Parliament was allowed to restrict the authority of the Prince
of Wales as Regent, it also served as a precedent for advancing the
representative right of Parliament, especially of the Commons, over the
hereditary rights and privileges of king and aristocracy; it might then lead to
undermine the very footing of the constitution ([3]). On 24 January, he wrote to
William Windham of his disagreement with a majority of the Whigs about the
address from Parliament to the prince, which required the Regent to respect the
wishes of the House of Commons. Seeing the prince's compliance with that
address as submission to "the requisition of the House of Commons", he
observed:

If the two Houses, ... should attempt to arrogate to themselves under the name of advice, the
whole power and authority of the Crown, the Monarchy would be an useless incumbrance on
the Country if it were not able to make a stand against such attempts. ... If the Prince has
authorised him to speak in this manner, all that I have said, or have to say on this side of the
alternative, is vain and useless. 11

However, other Whig MPs made light of his fear, and left him in an isolated
position. In Derry's words:

He [i.e. Burke] saw himself as the sole custodian of the Whig tradition; Shallow opportunism
had corrupted his colleagues' devotion to pure Whig principles, just as love of place had led
Pitt to place personal advantage above fidelity to the principles of the constitution. 12

However, there is room for argument over Derry's description of Fox, whose
conduct stemmed not from "shallow opportunism", but from his strategy for
office and from the need of confronting the movements towards break-up of the
British empire. For Fox, the Crown was a function for solidifying the British
empire: in the way, for instance, Britain and Ireland were united as sister -or
equal- kingdoms under a common King wearing both imperial Crowns ([6]). If
the parliaments of each kingdom, separately authorise the heir to the throne as
Regent on the ground of legislative independence, and even if the Irish
administration becomes independent in future, heredity of the united Crowns
serves as a guarantee of their solidification: "With the respect to Ireland, if the
two House of the British parliament named the Prince of Wales as regent of
right, most probably, the Irish parliament would do the same; if they speculated,
the Irish parliament would speculate".  

Pitt, devoting himself to administering the British empire as the prime minister, approached the issue from a different perspective. The rapidly increasing national strength of Britain in those days required a well-organised administrative system composed of efficient bureaucrats. Accordingly, relative to the legislative power, the administrative one inevitably became stronger and more centralised, simultaneously forming a bureaucratic structure to make its own role effective. It was this phenomenon which lay behind the strengthening power of the Court. Although this power, in its legalistic and centralised mode, seemed to belong to the king, it was becoming independent of both King and Parliament, because only those familiar with legal and economic matters could cope with it. Give the fact that, as a matter of course, frictions arose between the administrative power and the legislative one, the chief concern of Pitt was to regulate them. Therefore, seeing the crisis not as a matter of a vacancy in the third estate of Parliament, but as that of the temporary absence of the King, Pitt did not think that the incapability of the king raised in practice serious problems in the administrative system ([7]). Pitt treated the royal prerogative as a supervising function to stabilize the political situation of the British empire ([9]). Therefore, failing to foresee that his proposal would cause a constitutional “crisis”, he intended to propose that a Council of Regency should be newly established in Parliament, in order to authorise the heir to the throne as a temporary substitute for the King, with restriction of his power, saying: the only right [of other two branches of the parliament] would be found right capable of so effectually providing for the deficiency of the third branch of the legislature, as to enable them to appoint a power to give sanction to their proceedings, in the same manner as if the king was present.  

The arguments made publicly in pamphlets show the same sort of fragmentation as the Whigs had displayed in Parliament. In immediate response to this proposal, an anonymous pamphlet entitled The Prospect before us on the Present Momentous Crisis, Addressed to Every Friend of the Constitution which came out at the beginning of December in 1788, was close to Burke's view. To begin with, the pamphlet warned that division of the royal power would break up its unity, and make the political situation unstable, if the council of regency was empowered to share the royal authority with the Regent. The Prospect ... claimed that the throne of England was vacant in 1788; this situation was similar to the English Revolution; accordingly, following the

15 The Prospect before us on the Present Momentous Crisis, Addressed to Every Friend of the Constitution (Dublin,1788), p.17.
precedent that the Crown was bestowed on King William, not by the assembly of delegates called for that purpose, but on the ground of the hereditary right which he possessed as the heir of the former king, the Regency should be set up as soon as possible, otherwise a Government could not exist ([11][12]). As in Fox’s strategy outlined at the outset of this chapter, he also saw the unity of the Crowns between England and Ireland as the only medium to unite them ([10]). He expressed his fear in the event of both kingdoms taking different steps: There is another most serious view of this extraordinary undertaking. If the Prince is refused the Regency as a matter of right, or he reject it, ...and the Irish recognise his clear title to the government of their country, during his father’s incapacity, how then stands it with the two nations?

Promoting the unity of the throne as a guarantee of the mutual relationship of the sister kingdom, he concluded that “this is indeed a most serious consideration ... and any other course than that which it is the object of this argument to recommended, may cut the strings for ever that twist them [i.e. the two kingdoms] now together”. The argument in this pamphlet rested on a Humean dynamic view of the British constitution. Seeing the constitution as a system composed of different sorts of powers, the author claimed that a power, for example, the hereditary power of the king, should be replaced with the same kind of power.

The anonymous author of another pamphlet, Considerations on the Establishment of a Regency, though likewise stressing the maintenance of checks and balance of power of the constitutional system, spoke against a regency. He claimed that, although the liberties of the people against the executive power should be respected, it was more significant in the present case to secure the executive power itself, with which the king was permanently vested, “not merely for the sake of the Sovereign individually”, but for the sake of the people’s security, tranquility, and liberties ([13]). At the same time, however, he opposed those who considered the Lockean principle of social contract as merely speculative, and asserted that people should re-delegate their rights to a government newly composed without the third estate (the Crown), which would be authorised temporally “to perform the still more important function, of supplying the occasional deficiencies in the remaining branch of constitution, and of providing for the discharge of the duties of executive government” ([15]). He claimed that there was no need for the Regency, and that the Prince did not have a hereditary right to the throne unless his father died. Despite his moderation, his opinion logically implied that the

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- [12] Considerations on the Establishment of a Regency (Dublin,1788), p.34f..
Crown was merely a dispensable function for the actual political process ([14]). This sort of liberalist argument was to be pursued in Ireland by John Hely Hutchinson, secretary of state, as considered later. Unconsciously they made light of the monarchical element of the Constitution.

A further pamphlet *Answer to the “considerations on the establishment of a regency”* argued against the liberal non-monarchical tendency in the *Considerations*... Its anonymous author, seeing the pamphlet as raising problematic issues, observed:

"the principles he lays down as a basis on which to establish a temporary government on the constitutional principles, are not only not sound and constitutional, but grounded on the worst and most dangerous policy, and unsupported by any precedents applicable to the present case".  

His argument was one for the Regency, seeing it not only in terms of the exercise of the royal authority, but of the tranquility and unity of the British empire. Opposing the previous writer’s recommendation for people to re-delegate their rights, he asserted that the stability of the empire depended on the unconditional recognition of the Prince’s inherent right to the Crown, not on a selection of the most suitable person for a substitute by the public; the Prince of Wales was “more interested than any person to preserve the unity of empire, and the integrity of the constitution” ([17]). Moreover, taking account of the political situation in Ireland, he warned that, if the regency was treated not as part of the hereditary throne, but as an elective and restricted office, it would run a risk of breaking not only the unity but also the equality of each kingdom under the imperial sovereign; for, if each parliament has an influence on the throne of their own kingdom, “Ireland may elect for itself, and fill the office with a different Regent with different limitation”; on the other hand, Scotland would lose its independence as a kingdom, by the Crown of Scotland being elected by the Lords and Commons in Westminster. He ironically remarked: “who will venture to assert that, by the Union, the people of Scotland gave up their right of changing their government to a convention of two estates”?

Nervous about the rising power of the people, the author of *The prospect before us, on the present momentous crisis* claimed that the slow action taken by Pitt would revolutionise the constitution, for the reason that, if Pitt left the throne vacant, no legal authority could “exist in the country to do even the smallest act”; and what is worse, “a settlement of the nation, and an institution of a new species of third estate are attempted, upon a virtual dissolution of the frame of the government, and not one citizen or elector in Great Britain

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21 Ibid., p.6.
22 Ibid., p.23.
consulted". He understood that the principles of the constitution authorised the Lords and Commons only to declare law and to recognise right; the other legislative procedure of ratifying law and giving right belonged to the royal authority; therefore, on the basis of the British constitution, the legislature itself could neither be completed or act without the king, much less confer sovereignty on his successor. In this sense, supporting Fox, who was under attack for his defection from the Whig principles at that very moment, the author represented him as a guardian of the constitution, for a very ironical reason: Fox denied two democratic laws - in his words "the most notorious" ones- in the statute book: one providing that "any two of the three estates can make law"; the other that "surely altering the nature and genius of the executive authority, or meddling with the very smallest of its prerogatives can be no other than a legislative proceeding". Ironically enough, stressing points that Fox would not have welcomed, the author expressed his agreement with Fox in these highly anti-democratic monarchist points.

4.2 The Regency Crisis in Ireland

These publications revealed foreseeable troubles relating to Ireland, if the British parliament was competent to restrict the Royal authority. That is to say, the Irish parliament would have good excuse to authorise their own Regent independent of the British one. For this reason, even those with democratic opinions had to claim the heredity of the Crown in order to secure the Anglo-Irish connection. In Ireland, the young members of the Irish administration were quick to see a constitutional crisis for the process of solidification of the British empire by the unity of the Crowns. In November 1788, the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Lieutenant, began to be worried about the parliamentary proceedings to authorise a Regent in Ireland. Since, in Britain, the main point of the debate was the legitimacy of restriction of the Regent’s authority, none of his English colleagues turned their attention to difficulties arising in the Irish context; if the parliament had authority over the Regent according to the principles in Pitt’s proposal, it would face incompatibility between the legislative independence of Ireland based on the Yelverton act and the unity of the Crowns dictated by the Act of the 4th of William and Mary.

The Irish administration presented a proposal on the Regency in the form of a bill; this would require the Great Seal of England for its enforcement as an act. This condition, which the Yelverton act, the basis of legislative independence, itself dictated, suggested that the Irish parliament must wait for

23 The prospect..., p.65.
24 Ibid., p.70.
establishment of the Regency in Britain, and that the Irish Crown would inevitably follow the British Crown. The administration supposed that the procedure in the bill would automatically meet the Act of the 4th of William and Mary which provided that the kingdom of Ireland must be annexed and united to the imperial Crown of England, and that it could avoid the friction between the Act of the 4th of William and Mary and the Yelverton act. On the other hand, Grattan moved that the Irish parliament should authorise the Prince as a Regent of the Irish Crown not by statute, but by a direct address of the parliament to him, and which thus would be free from any legal connection with Britain. In this way, the parliamentary debate kicked off; in it the main point was which mode should be legitimate in terms of the Constitution, a bill or an address. Although the debate had legalistic appearance, its arguments, revealing each speaker's ideological views on the Irish monarchy and constitution, concerned the core issue: the independence of the Crown of Ireland.

Adding to this, Grattan's argument in the debate unveiled a theoretical inconsistency which was papered over in a coalition between Grattan and Fox. Grattan, maintaining the independence of the Irish legislature, exhorted MPs to authorise the Prince of Wales to be a Regent of the Irish King with an address ahead of the action of the British parliament. His argument for the separation of Irish parliamentary procedure from British was grounded on the independence of the Irish Crown, rather than on legislative independence. He argued that the present state of the Irish legislature had become imperfect, because of an actual vacancy of the third estate in the parliament, namely the Crown of Ireland; therefore, the parliament should restore its own deficiency with a Regent of the Irish Crown; if the proposal emanating from the Irish administration (and embodied in the bill) were accepted, the Crown of Ireland would be dependent not only upon the British Crown, but upon the British parliament. Hence, as the parliament of an independent kingdom, it had, on Grattan's argument, to secure the independence of the Crown by its own address to the Prince ([19]). His identification of the independence of the Irish Crown with one of the Irish parliament and nation, made him monarchistic. In his view, the independence and hereditary authority of the Irish Crown was a theoretical ground for the independence of the legislature ([20]). Seeing the legislature as a branch of the "Irish" constitutional monarchy, he drew its authority not from its representative character itself, but from the independent authority of the Irish Crown. Therefore, the administration's view, that the Irish parliament was independent, but that the Irish Crown was dependent upon the British one, was totally unacceptable for him. While Fox maintained the hereditary rights of the Prince, his claim was grounded on a notion that, since each authority stemmed from different origins - the Commons from
representative rights, the Lords and the Crown from the hereditary ones, directly approved by the people, they have no competence to restrict the other's rights themselves, or to appoint the other's position. Grattan, using this principle for justifying the independence of the Crown from the British parliament and emphasising the constitutional importance of the Crown, on the other hand, made the assumption that the Irish parliament had supremacy over the Crown of Ireland in his plan to address the Prince of Wales ([21]). In this sense, despite their superficial association, the logic in Fox's argument for the regency is incompatible with Grattan's.

John Philpot Curran, a leading Whig controversialist, made a parliamentary speech in favour of Grattan's motion. Adopting Burke's logic, he criticised Fitzgibbon's argument on behalf of the administration, for its violation of the heredity of the Crown ([23]). He began his speech by confirmation of this point: "the principle of the British constitution, ..., in either kingdom simply was, that the third estate [i.e. the Crown] should be certain and not elective". So long as this principle secured unity of the Crowns, he argued, there was no need for solicitude about a break of the union; Fitzgibbon's misunderstanding of the Crown as elective led himself to claim the annexation of both Crowns dictated by the Act of the 4th of William and Mary. Who "was the regent of England?", Curran asked Fitzgibbon with full irony, "One elected"? If so, he went on, "England's two houses had a right to elect a third estate for Ireland". Understanding the union of the two crowns in the compact as on an equal footing with each other, Curran challenged Fitzgibbon's statement that the Crown of Ireland was dependent upon the Crown of England.

Furthermore, in terms of the importance of the Crown as the third estate in the legislature, Curran attacked Fitzgibbon. Just before the outbreak of the French Revolution, this leader of the Irish Whigs affirmed that the "frame of the state was composed of two great segments of arches, and the crown was the key stone: if that key stone, by any fatality, fell out, what was to be done"? Claiming that the parliament in an actual vacancy of the Throne was incompetent to make any acts, because of the deficiency of an essential part of legislature, he refuted Fitzgibbon's statement that the Irish Parliament could not have the Irish Regency bill passed as a act without the Great Seal of England. He said that his statement suggested that the Houses were competent to make an act without the third estate; "if so, a regent was unnecessary" ([22]).

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25 P.R., IX (1789), p.58.
26 Ibid., p.60.
27 Ibid., p.60.
28 Ibid., p.60.
Facing strong opposition from MPs with patriotic sentiments inspired by Grattan, John Fitzgibbon, Attorney General, had the harshest experience. His outstanding administrative ability and sharp legal mind made him realise the danger to constitutional order, caused by incompatibility of powers between both counties. He saw the hereditary sovereign authority as the sole bond of the empire under the legislative independence of each kingdom, and the administrative systems as united only by the medium of the King’s assent, namely the application of the Great Seal of England; that is to say, the whole unity of the empire depended on the fact that the Crown of Ireland and that of England had been possessed by one and the same person. In Parliament, he warned MPs that an Irish Regent made no sense for passing acts, without having granted to him the use the Great Seal of England which originally belonged only to the British Regent; supposing different Regents in both Kingdoms, the Irish Regent could not give the royal assent until he obtained the British Regent’s consent ([25]). While he implicitly conceded that such a condition, which diminished the dignity and independence of the Irish legislature, would give offence to Irish people, he declared that after legislative independence in 1782 it was the actual legal system. Moreover, from the aspect of power relationship, he argued that, if the Irish parliament had authorised the prince as a Regent of the Crown of Ireland, it would have meant that the parliament’s authority was superior to the King’s; accordingly, once such a precedent was set, the union of the empire would be broken in constitutional terms. Realising those constitutional risks, Fitzgibbon, less as a pro-English politician, than as an administrator of the empire, became the last guardian of the actual constitution in the final stage of the regency crisis. His awareness of the fragility of constitutional unity was to lead him afterwards to become a zealous supporter of the union of the two parliaments.

The core of his argument against the establishment of the Irish regency prior to a decision by Britain, was based on the Act of the 4th of William and Mary, which said that the kingdom of Ireland was “annexed and united to the imperial crown of England”, and “by the laws and statutes of this kingdom ... justly and rightfully depending upon, and belonging and for ever united to the same”. It is notable that, in contrast to Burke and Fox, he did not dwell on the hereditary right of the Prince, and simply grounded his opinion of the unity of both Crowns on those legal provisions ([26]). With his open legalism, his political and social perspective was modern. However, he faced considerable objections in Ireland. On the other hand, the premodern argument, which stressed the heredity of the royal authority to secure the unity of the Crowns, enjoyed a supportive audience, because it could avoid a clear statement of the

29 Ibid., p.48.
dependence of the Irish Crown.

Fitzgibbon’s speech in the parliament, as reported in the Debates in the Irish Parliament on the regency, was cast in a pro-British tone, slightly different from the description in the Parliamentary Register: According to the Debates ..., he represented that
the Crown of Ireland as inseparably annexed to, and dependent upon, the Crown of England; ...if we are to remain connected with Great Britain, that connection can exist only by the dependence of the Irish Crown upon the Crown of England, or by the union of the Parliament of Ireland with the Parliament of England. 30

This passage distorted the actual meaning of his speech, because, according to the Parliamentary Register, he did not mention the union of the parliaments. At this stage, still accepting the existing framework of Anglo-Irish connection, he pointed out that both the dependence of the Irish Crown and independence of the Irish Parliament were two indispensable elements for the existing system of balance of power in the empire, describing the former as their “security”, the latter as their “freedom”, and warned advocates of the independence of the Irish Crown to recollect that “the independence of the Irish crown” meant “its separation from England” ([27]). 31

Most members in parliament failed to realise the gravity of the constitutional and imperial situation. Grattan and his followers took no account of those imperial matters, because their concern was exclusively preservation of the relationship with England on an equal footing, not protection of the actual Irish interests within the empire. Fitzgibbon tried to persuade MPs, though vainly, that dignity and independence of the Irish parliament did not mean taking the lead in the imperial question and differing with Great Britain. 32

At that very moment, Dominick Trant, a son-in-law of Fitzgibbon, issued a pamphlet in support of Fitzgibbon. He criticised in terms of expediency the parliamentary debates. He described the situation as “an insurmountable barrier” in which “Local interests and prejudices, ancient laws and habits, various combinations of general innovation” were united with each other. Calling Grattan and his supporters “speculative politicians”, he sarcastically remarked that “Men of warm imaginations frequently confound the ‘possible’ with the ‘probable’”; whereas the practical politician should be led not by imagination but judgment. He renounced a notion of a civil government established by people’s will as a creature of “the plastic powers of Fancy”, and claimed that “strong expediency sometimes equals necessity ... the present

30 Debates in the Irish Parliament on the regency, annexed to Report of the Lords Committees, appointed to examine the physicians who have attended his majesty (London, 1789), p. 35.
31 P.R., IX (1789), p.53.
32 Ibid., p.39.
order of things is not always to be violated on the contingency of producing a better ... the 'best possible constitution' is as much a relative term and idea in the Moral, as in the Physical world". He warned MPs that their recent support of Grattan's motion would alter the framework of the constitution; a certain party, in the name of security and independence of Ireland, made use for its own purpose of Irish gentlemen's inclination towards patriotism; such conduct would "lead to Consequences dangerous to our political Security, subversive of our fundamental Laws, and fatal to the established Religion and Government of this Country". Trant argued that the succession of the Crown of England was out of the authority of the Irish parliament, even if Ireland had legislative independence; because "the present right of the house of Brunswick to the Crown of England, France, Ireland" was founded on the limitation by some Acts of the English parliament which dictated that only the King, Lords and Commons have the power to limit, arrange or alter the succession of the Crown of England; therefore, "the Succession to the Crown of Ireland" was "settled by the Act, not of the Irish, but of the English, Parliament" ([28][29]). Pointing out that the Irish legislature was independent not of the British Crown, but of the British legislature, he emphasised that "Ireland was, and must be for ever, knit to the Crown of Great Britain". In his view, "the inseparable annexation of the Crown of Ireland to that of Great Britain" was "an original and fundamental Act of Union, prior and paramount to Act of Parliament, the great cornerstone of federal compact, and the unalterable political MAGNA CHARTA of the Constitution". Opposing Grattan, he claimed that the security and interest of Ireland depended on the British empire, and that all "salutary purposes can be effectually obtained only by keeping, entire and unimpaired, the Unity of the Supreme, Executive and Controlling power of the empire", because "the strength of the whole, and security of every part, of the British empire" consisted in the unity ([28]).

Trant's argument basically followed Pitt's principle: only the British Parliament was authorised to limit and arrange the succession of the Crown; on the other hand, only the possessor of the Crown of England can claim a right to the Crown of Ireland; therefore the Irish parliament had no urgent need to act on the royal succession but should await the British parliament's resolution on Regency. Fitzgibbon emphasised the same point in the parliamentary debate on 11 February, 1789: "the Independence of your Parliament is your freedom;

33 Dominick Trant, Observations on the late proceedings in the parliament of Ireland, in the question of a regency for that Kingdom (Dublin, 1789), p.3 f.
34 Ibid., p.4.
35 Ibid., p.22.
36 Ibid., p.23.
37 Ibid., p. 25.
your dependence on the crown of England is your security for that freedom." 38

Another two politicians, the Earl of Bellamont and Robert Johnson, MP for Borough of Hillsborough, are worth noting as speaking in terms of their intention to preserve an united executive power between Ireland and England for the sake of imperial interests. A speech of the Earl of Bellamont, in the House of Lords on 13 February, reflected his concern about maintenance of the united executive power and his awareness of the Anglo-Irish connection as an imperial issue. He said that as even a simple monarchy required a unity of executive, a conjunct empire composed of more than one monarchy, demanded unity; "a divided executive would necessarily be followed by weakness; so in conjunct empire, a disunited or different executive must be instantaneously productive of confusion". 39 He, as well as Fitzgibbon, saw the Crown as the executive power of the empire, in contrast with patriotic MPs' view of the Crown as an estate in the legislature.

Johnson's speech, in the Commons on 11 February, also highlighted the same question. He defined the Crown of Ireland as "a word to express the executive power", which belonged to and depended on the Crown of England. Therefore, he said, both powers must have the same quality lest they violate their union. 40 Frederick Flood, a patriotic MP, criticised this definition which would "pare down and weaken the royal and rightful executive powers, which were originally given for the public good". 41 The controversy revealed the fundamental difference in the notion of the Crown between functional imperialistic constitutionalism and patriotic ancient constitutionalism. A significant difference of understanding of the constitution existed between politicians on the administration side and on the patriotic opposition side. For Fitzgibbon, a member of the administration, the deficiency of the third estate in the legislature meant nothing but a vacancy in the office which provided the Royal assent and affixed the Great Seal. Therefore, he thought that, provided a Regent was supplied to the third estate, the legislative system would work as usual. His view was that of imperialistic constitutionalism. In contrast to this, Grattan and Curran's notion of legislature stemmed from the notion of the mixed government in the ancient constitution independent of Britain. Therefore, their organic perspective and Fitzgibbon's functionalist one were fundamentally incompatible.

Curran is a typical example of the coexistence of monarchism and

38 P.R., IX (1789), p.53.
39 Heads of the earl of Bellamont's speeches in the House of Lords, on the address of that House, to his royal highness the Prince of Wales, to take upon him the regency of this kingdom, Friday Feb. 13th and Monday Feb. 16th, 1789 (Dublin, 1789), p. 2.
40 P.R., IX (1789), p.64.
41 Ibid., p.66.

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liberalism. Although his speeches and activities in Parliament and the Bar sound liberalist and constitutionalist, his notion of human rights was confined to the framework of the rights of subjects of the Irish Crown, not based on the general and natural rights of man ([23]). His liberal doctrine involved abhorrence of the masses, and antipathy towards democracy. It is not surprising that afterwards, when Curran refused to join the U.I., Thomas Addis Emmet described his attitude as “more guarded before him than before the Attorney-General”. Furthermore, the following passage clearly conveys Curran’s admiration for the Crown in contrast with his contempt for the people: I like not the affectation of legislating by two estates; it is holding out an idea to the people, that you can do altogether without the third; it is making a silly experiment by which the third estate, the only security of our liberty, is brought into disrepute.... The right of election was the right of ambition, of faction, of intrigue, of shedding civil blood. Curran and Grattan grounded the independence of Ireland on that of the Crown of Ireland. Stressing the importance of the Crown of Ireland in the composition of the Irish legislature, they sought to shut out the authority of the British parliament. On the other hand, by the address to the Prince, they intended to demonstrate the supremacy of the Irish parliament over the Crown as if it were the appointment of the King by Parliament in the English Revolution. The debate between Fitzgibbon and Curran, opinion leaders from each sides of the Irish parliament, characterised the divide between imperial administration and a regional legislature within a traditional political framework. The former sought national interests at the expense of national independence, whereas the latter sought independence as a sovereign state under the Crown of Ireland, keeping people out of sovereignty.

However, a few members in the parliament broke through this old constitutionalist framework. The Secretary of the State, John Hely Hutchinson, differing with Fitzgibbon about the annexing of the Irish Crown to the English one on the ground of the Act of the 4th of William and Mary, said that the Act did not apply to the case of Regency. Regarding a Regent only as a temporary substitute for the royal functions, specifically, for affixing the Great seal of England, Hutchinson thought the establishment of Regency was merely a matter of legislation, not of hereditary authority. In order to have the Irish Regency bills passed as law, the grant of a commission to give the Royal Assent would first be necessary before the the Great Seal of England could be affixed; therefore, whether the Great Seal of England was affixed by the Regent of Ireland or of England was not the first item on the agenda; the question who should empower the Commission to give the Royal Assent, and how, came first.

"P.R., IX (1789), p.60.
"Ibid., p.58."
He answered this question with a notion of representative power: the Lords and Commons of Ireland, whether assembled in Parliament or in Convention, are fully competent to supply every deficiency in the supreme executive, from whatever cause such deficiency many arise; they had this power, because they represented the three estates of the realm.

To distinguish his view from a republican doctrine, he declared that the constitution of Ireland did not accept a delegated government unless it was under the control and direction of the Monarch: he argued that this principle did not challenge the precedence of the 1688 Revolution, but it could be adopted for maintenance of the present constitution, specifically for "the supply of the deficiency in the executive"; the two Houses could supply the vacancy of the Throne not by their legislative capacity but their representative one, because they did not change the existing constitution. His understanding of the constitution is noteworthy. It means a total mechanism of balance of power ([32]). Adhering strictly to the balance of power, he remarked that they only could give grants, could not annex any restrictions, because no branch of the government, even in the case of the Throne, was empowered to put restrictions on other branches to which its own "power did not extend" ([33]). On this principle, he opposed those who were planning to appoint a Regent by an Act of Parliament. He argued that they were intending to restrict the Regency, rather than to appoint the Regent, on the ground of their legislative power; however, in terms of legal competence, their legislative capacity could not allow such a conduct; Furthermore, in terms of balance of power, unless the regent had the same power as the King had to cope with the power of the Houses, the sovereign would become infirm, and the balance of power would be lost. He made a case against the restriction, without any reference to the hereditary right of the Prince. With this penetrating view of modern liberal principles in the power machinery of government, he both argued against Pitt's policy, and broke away from Burke's way of reasoning. Accordingly, requesting the Prince of Wales "to assume the exercise of the Royal functions, as the only constitutional and practicable mood of proceeding", he voted for the Grattan's motion for an address. His standpoint, however, was clearly different from Grattan's. As a supporter of the administration, his stance is particularly interesting, and gives significance to his divergence from the views of the Irish administration.

Concerning the relation between the two Crowns, Hutchinson stated that the Irish bills could be certified only with the Great Seal of Ireland, because the Yelverton Act of 1782 dictated that the British administration had to affix the

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45 Ibid., p.56; Debates... p.41f..
46 Ibid., p.54; Debates... p.40.
47 Ibid., p.57; Debates... p.42.
48 Ibid., p.56; Debates... p.41.
Great Seal of England on the bills without any alteration; therefore, who was authorised to affix the Great Seal of England for the moment did not matter for the Irish side ([31]). In this way, legally grounding national independence on the regional representative power of the parliament, he challenged Fitzgibbon who stressed the dependence of the Irish Crown upon the British one. By the same token, he differed from Grattan and Curran, who, respecting the heredity of the Crown, strongly attacked the notion of election of a Regent by a representative power. The regency debates forced people to confront basic constitutional issues which were usually taken for granted, thus obscuring considerable divergences of opinion.

For a long time, Hutchinson has been underestimated by historians. His “defection” from the administration to the opposition in the Regency Crisis has been attributed to his eagerness to secure office in a Whig administration. His contemporaries also blamed him for the same reason, and saw him as a proselyte for Grattan. In reply to criticism from Johnson, he said that “he had been accused of ingratitude”, but “he was not ungrateful; What he had received he had given a good and valuable consideration for”. As this passage shows, he opposed the administration according to his liberal principles. Furthermore, his personal connection is noteworthy. As Provost, he endeavoured to modernise the college curriculum despite strong rejection from the College side. Although Tone expressed his ill-feeling towards him at that time, he paid attention to his conduct. Moreover, Hutchinson’s son, Richard Hely Hutchinson, a future Lord Donoughmore, was a close friend of Arthur O’Connor, and both men went to France in the summer of 1792, where they met Lafayette. Richard was a strong supporter of Catholic emancipation, and was also in contact with Tone, who served the Catholic Committee as secretary at that time.

To understand the formation of liberal radicalism, we need to illustrate how imperialistic constitutionalism came to be criticised by liberals. As shown in Chapter 2 (p.34-36), Hutchinson and Parsons were supporters of development-centric political economy. Although they were within the pale of imperialistic constitutionalism, their earnest wish to civilise Ireland led them to a different standpoint from Fitzgibbon, who, as an imperial administrator, sought to preserve the unity of the empire. Seeking to set up a more beneficial place for Ireland in the political system of the empire, they intended to draw on the power and affluence of the empire for the establishment of civilised society in Ireland. In their eyes, patriotic MPs’ argument for the independence of an Irish Regent, locating the Crown of Ireland in historical antiquity, appeared

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44 Ibid., p.65.
mere retrospective casuistry. In fact, the grounds of patriotic ancient constitutionalist arguments - the independence of the Crown of Ireland, which was drawn from a shadow of the British Crown -, were in a legal sense weak. In Britain itself, the prerogatives of the Crown and the rules of succession lacked statutory definitions, and that made the case for an Irish Crown all the more difficult. In one sense, the Irish Crown was a paper or notional crown consoling people for their patriotic sentiment. Laurence Parsons challenged this illusion with his legalistic and realistic perspective. His argument was very subtle in the sense that, candidly showing the fatal constitutional dependence of Ireland, it suggested an effective way of supporting the claim of its independence by means of legal procedure. According to a principle of constitutional monarchy, he argued, only law gave a king his authority; by the same token, nothing but law was competent to take his authority away; therefore, any address was incompetent to make a Regent. In terms of legal procedure, he supported the administration which denounced the empowering of a Regent by means of address as inconsistent with the Irish constitution. 51 Then, referring to the difference between the constitution of England and that of Ireland, he pointed out a real impediment to the independence of the legislature. He said that the Irish constitution consisted of four, not three, estates; the fourth was the Great Seal of England, which superimposed upon the Irish constitution an extrinsic form, and which was "distinct and independent of the three estates"; it must be affixed by the King of England, not by the King of Ireland, because as the King of Ireland he could have no authority over the Great Seal of England "which cannot belong to our constitution"; therefore, only an English regent could be empowered for the Great Seal of England and have a real executive power over Ireland. 52 In his view, there was no room for an Irish Regent in the constitution ([35]). What is worse, he continued, if the third estate - the Crown of Ireland - were recognised as vacant, in a situation where the Lord Lieutenant actually served as a deputy of the Irish King, it "will be merged in the regency of England", rather than in the imperial Crown of England, because only the English regent, not the Irish regent, was authorised to send over his deputy to the third estate and to complete the deficiency of the legislature; therefore, to secure the independence of the third estate from England, the parliament must be recognised as effective and competent. 53 On this ground, Parsons denounced Grattan's motion as "the folly" and "an idle gasconade" which was based on an impracticable assumption of an independent power of an Irish regent. 54

51 P.R., IX (1789), p.95.
52 Ibid., p.121.
53 Ibid., p.122ff..
54 Ibid., p.121.
Parsons warned supporters of Grattan’s motion that it was only “a display of an inclination to separate the executive, without the ability to do so”, and that contrary to their patriotic sentiment it would damage the independence of the Irish constitution. Pointing out the wedge of “security” which England drove into the Irish constitution to prevent Ireland from passing “a law to sever the executive, or impair the connection of these kingdoms”, he observed that, if the Irish parliament “had proceeded by bill” instead of address, and “if a chancellor of England should put [the Great Seal of England] to a bill appointing a different regent from England, he must have done it at the hazard of his head”. This was an effect of the Yelverton Act; and thus they “have set aside this satisfactory security, which England should have had for an identity in the two kingdoms of sovereign power”. Parsons, realising the real claim of independence ultimately would lead to a legal struggle with the British government and to the collapse of the existing constitution, judged that it would damage the real interests of Ireland.

During this serious debate on the constitutional legitimacy of the Regent, in spite of the speakers’ loyalty to their country and nation, the actual status of the Irish Crown became unveiled. Finally, Gervais Parker Bushe, M.P. for Waterford, Grattan’s father-in-law, in pointing out, in the logic of *reductio ad absurdum*, the absurdity of Fitzgibbon’s construction, exposed the phantom existence of the Irish King. Understanding that Fitzgibbon saw affixing of the Great Seal of England to bills as an sufficient condition for laws, he claimed that the argument implied a disregard for the volition of the Irish King. According to Fitzgibbon’s argument, Bushe observed that “after a Bill had been certified under the Great Seal of England, it might be passed” without the volition of the Irish king, if it had been “agreed to by the three estates of Parliament of Ireland”. Putting the question thus, he then asked: “where is the will of the king of Ireland”? In fact, his argument put a finger on the weakest point of Fitzgibbon’s construction: if the authority to give a royal assent to a bill exclusively belonged to the Imperial Crown, not to the Irish Crown itself, then Ireland would not be a monarchy under the direct control of the Crown of Ireland. Bushe himself, regarding this conclusion deduced from Fitzgibbon’s principles as absurd, concluded that therefore the Great Seal of England must be only a precondition for the royal assent, and that the royal assent must be the assent of the king of Ireland.

Although Bushe intended to accuse Fitzgibbon of infidelity to the king of Ireland, his deduction and conclusion from Fitzgibbon’s principles was not absurd, but legally right, and the weakest point of the present constitution

55 Ibid., p.126.
56 Ibid., p.67; Debates..., p.46.
which Fitzgibbon already had realised. Supposing that an Irish bill was returned under the British Great Seal without any alteration according to the act of 1782, and that there was no law about an Irish Great Seal, actually the imperial Crown would lose its direct administrative power in Ireland. The legal authority of the Crown of Ireland would be restricted to the third estate in the Irish legislature, which was independent of the imperial administration. In this case, Ireland would be only a nominal monarchy. Fitzgibbon himself did realise this weakness. Therefore, he later made efforts for the legal establishment of the Great Seal of Ireland to secure the royal power of the King of Ireland.

4.3 The Influence of the Regency Crisis on Tone and O'Connor

The debate on the Regency Crisis revealed the constitutional dependence of Ireland upon Britain, and the basic attitude on both sides in the parliament towards the Crown. At this stage, neither Tone or O'Connor, although they realised this constitutional dependence, saw complete separation from Britain as indispensable for national interests. It was the Lord Lieutenant's reactive conduct at the final stage of the crisis which first made them realise the vices of the existing constitutional system. Their speeches and writing a couple of years later show not only their indignation and disappointment at the political maneuvers and manipulation between the administration and the opposition, but a penetrating view of the existing political system.

While Buckingham was still refusing to transfer the address to the Prince, which had already been approved by both Houses against the wishes of the administration, he received the news of the king's recovery on 20 February. However, the crisis was not over at this stage. Acknowledging his narrow victory, he immediately presented a list of placemen and pensioners' emoluments, which actually meant parliamentary members' rewards and penalties estimated according to their loyalty to the administration. This news and the issue of this list turned the tide in parliament, and a considerable number of MPs turned around and supported the administration. Giving MPs places and pensions under the Crown as a reward for services was a means of political maneuver and manipulation, which predecessors of Buckingham as well had used. Against this reaction, foreseeing a possible prorogation or dissolution of the parliament by the lord lieutenant, the opposition moved a short money bill on the basis of the Common's essential right to originate money and supply bills. On 25 February, William Brownlow, MP for County Armagh, referring to an event under Lord Townshend's administration, criticised the Lord Lieutenant's exertion of unconstitutional influence on the MPs at that time. In reply to him, Fitzgibbon, putting aside criticism of his own side, explained the
event after the prorogation by Townshend as follows:

[When next they [i.e. MPs] met they voted him [i.e. Townshend] an address of thanks, which address cost this nation half a million of money. I hope to God I shall never again see such effects from party, I hope God I shall never again see half a million of the people’s money employed to procure an address from their representatives.]

Although Fitzgibbon denied manipulation of MPs in 1789, his word “half a million of money” was seized on as an intimation or threat that it could happen again, and used as an argument to the discredit of Buckingham’s administration.

O’Connor cynically referred to the word in his speech in the Commons in 1791, when Grattan said that the supporters of the administration “threaten to expend half a million for battering down the aristocracy”; and “have sold the peerage, and thrown the honour of nobility in the dust”. This wording gave O’Connor a chance to criticise Grattan’s aristocratic patriotism, and for the first time he openly stated his political view. O’Connor saw the emergence of the so-called patriots in the 1770s as resistance by old Anglo-Irish aristocracy, whose power strengthened as “undertakers” during non-resident lord lieutenants’s administration from 1701 to 1767, was merged into British imperial power in 1767, when Lord Townshend, “an advocate of strong imperial government”, became “resident in order to restore the political initiative to the executive”. Dismissing the patriotic opposition as a “patriot aristocracy”, O’Connor bitterly criticised its anti-democratic nature, papered over with its apparent popularity, in his speech on 19 March 1791. He saw the corrupt system of distribution of place and pension as a means of reconciling British imperial power and Irish aristocracy at the expense of Irish national wealth. He remarked that, in Ireland, the imperial administration had not seriously sought to establish a mechanism of constitutional monarchy, but instead compromised with the old aristocratic power, which opposed it “with all the malice of vindictive opposition stimulated by disappointment; every time the patriot aristocracy attempted drive people to discredit the imperial administration with “plausible pretenses” or agitating “invention”, the administration, satisfying the aristocracy’s interests, had reached a compromise without constitutional reform of the domestic political system: “Such have we seen in Lord Townshend’s administration, and such have we seen opposed by loading the people with half a million of money: Such have we seen in the Marquis of Buckingham’s administration”. Then, alluding to Fitzgibbon’s speech in response to Grattan’s allusion to it, he said: “I hope we will never see [the administration] opposed at the same expense, or at any expense, but by rejecting its rapacious demands, 

57 Ibid., p.181.
58 Ibid., p.350.
59 James Kelly, Prelude to Union, p.12, p.18.
and leveling its enormous powers to the standard of the constitution”. This speech shows us that O’Connor, differing with patriotic MPs, took the same position as Parsons and Hutchinson, making economic or social development the central focus of his thought. At this stage, realising the imperfection of mixed government in Ireland, he still believed that the British empire, by establishing constitutional monarchy in each region, would promote civilisation in time.

Furthermore, in 1797, when Fox defended his own resolution to denounce the Irish administration’s enormities at Westminster, “half a million of money” was again alluded to by him in the presence of Fitzgibbon himself. Fox sarcastically criticised the vices committed by the administration in the wake of the Regency Crisis:

a great accession of influence was gained by the crown, and parliament was prevailed upon to unsay all they had said, and to retract every opinion they had given. ... A person of high consideration was known to say, that half a million of money had been expended to quell an opposition in Ireland and that as much more must be expended to bring the legislature of that country to a proper temper.  

Tone also was disappointed by MPs on both sides of the House. In 1790, he wrote, “No Government can pretend to exist in this Kingdom, clogged and cramped by such an incumbent opposition, unless it appear that the opposition and the people are of different sentiments”. Pointing to the constitutional defects in the political system of Ireland, he said that strengthening administrative power caused lesser bad effects in England, because an English political system had been altered in accordance with the principle of the separation and balance of power, in which politicians watched and checked each other in Parliament and in cabinet. The Irish political system, by contrast, still remained an old autocratic structure, in which the sole minister—the lord lieutenant—had unrestricted powers in the name of the Crown: “he has all the impunity of the regal character; nay, more, he can do what the King, in the plenitude of his power, cannot”. In Ireland, he went on, strengthening administrative power easily bring about widespread corruption; the worst was the “unconstitutional influence” of the Lord Lieutenant, that is to say, distribution of pensions and places to MPs, which had undermined the independence of the parliament of Ireland. Against the opinions which glossed over corruption for the reason of necessity of “a strong Government in Ireland”, he remarked: “What is a strong Government? ... can it mean a Government of force, that conscious of the steady support of a venal majority, holds the public

60 P.R., XI (1791), p.350-52.0
opinion at defiance”? Illustrating the predominance of a Lord Lieutenant with his power over the use of the revenues, he said that “how is that power exerted in a country professing to be independent of England?”; in England a letter of the King acknowledging the payment of any pension, salary, or specific sum, had to be countersigned by three ministers, whereas in Ireland in “pursuance of this letter a warrant is granted here, signed by the Lord Lieutenant, and countersigned by the Secretary, on which, without further process, the money is paid”. In this way, Tone saw the vices as structural.

The Regency Crisis invoked not only the Anglo-Irish constitutional issue, but it made both O’Connor and Tone realise the defects of the domestic political system brought about by the backwardness of the Irish constitution, namely, the old autocratic system and the exclusion of real civil power from the legislature, as well as Anglo-Irish matters. Idealising the constitutional monarchist system in Britain, both men noticed that the system had not been established in Ireland, and foresaw the limitations of any reform within the existing framework of the constitution. Unless the check and balance system was introduced into the constitutional machinery of domestic government, they thought, the Irish nation faced a choice only between the alternative of the despotism of Lord Lieutenant or of aristocracy, because, the constitution itself let the power of the monopolistic government have “unconstitutional influence” on the parliament and deprive it of its independence. However, neither O’Connor nor Tone realised at this stage that the British empire could not afford any wages to seek an improvement in the Irish situation, because the imperial system in itself had a device for enslaving Ireland.

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Tone, “Extracts from a review of the conduct of administration” (1790), in Life I, p.307-11.
Chapter 5:
AWARENESS OF "THE WEALTH OF NATIONS": POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE EMERGENCE OF NEW NATIONALISM

I confess I am, in the outset, much staggered by a phrase so very specious, and of such general acceptation [sic] as this of "the good of the empire." Yet, after all, what does it mean? or what is the empire?

Theobald Wolfe Tone ¹

I cannot hear the Right Hon. Gentleman [i.e. Grattan] panegyrize the opposition, and utter such soul charge against the supporters of Administration, without some animavertion; the stile of his panegyrick reminds me of an old foolish Romanish [sic] tenet, which allowed a man, after he had sufficient store of good works to ensure his own salvation, to hand over the remainder to his neighbour.

Arthur O'Connor ²

5.0 The Novelty in Tone and O'Connor’s Nationalism

As the previous chapter conveys in its conclusion, the debates during the Regency Crisis revealed the fragility of the connection between both kingdoms under the same king. In the legislative system after 1782, there was some incompatibility between the independence of the kingdoms and their actual connection. Moreover, not only politically but economically, from the time of the commercial propositions in 1785, public opinion, as far as foreign trade was concerned, was aware of the hollowness of the doctrine that the connection with the British empire enabled the Irish nation to share a common prosperity. The parliamentary opposition of Grattan and Ponsonby was less as guardian of Irish interests than as mere jealous patriots. While in calling for the independence of their own country without defining any specific economic policy few patriotic politicians did not openly criticise the indispensable nature of the English connection, they were opposed to an imperial view of trade within the British empire. The political views of radicals like Tone and O'Connor were formed in criticising alike patriots like Grattan and imperialists like Fitzgibbon. A passage in O'Connor’s speech on the pension bill in the Commons in 1791, conveys his antipathy towards patriotic aristocracy.³ In the early 1790s, Tone and O'Connor, in their respective spheres, realised the falseness of the patriotic opposition. Contrary to the traditional view in Irish historiography, which has seen patriotism in the early 1780s as a source of radicalism in the 1790s, the most important feature of the liberal radicalism of Tone and O'Connor was the emphasis on economic or social development. Tone's comment on Laurence

¹Tone, Life I, p.333.
²P.R., XI (1791), p.350.
³Ibid., p.350.
Parsons would endorse this point:
I was exceedingly assisted by an old friend of mine, Sir Laurence Parsons ... . It was he who first turned me on this great question [i.e. the connection with England] ... . What his conduct might be in a crisis, I know not, but I can answer for the truth and justice of his theory. 4

The radical claim of real independence was underpinned by their keen-sighted perception of an indivisible connection between domestic monopoly and the unconstitutional influence of the British government. In this sense, we should distinguish an undercurrent of new nationalism from the old patriotic tradition which had originated from the legislative independence in 1782: the former targeted the imperial system itself; the latter English ascendancy over Ireland.

The Commercial Propositions in 1784-5 were an attempt by the British administration to establish a new economic system for the empire. Pitt followed Adam Smith’s theory that the common commercial interests produced by free trade would improve the wealth of each nation and enhance their relationship. Especially in the case of Ireland, Pitt expected that the increase of national wealth would bring about political stabilization, and “the improvement in Ireland’s economic fortunes that would flow from a commercial union would pave the way for a new dawn in Anglo-Irish relations”. 5 His free trade policy was opposed by public opinion, which was broadly organised by the Whigs and merchants in Britain. In Ireland, stirred up by hardening British public resistance to concession, opposition rose in parliament. As James Kelly points out, the majority of members opposed the commercial bill for the constitutional reason, which Henry Grattan most clearly expressed in his speeches in the Commons on 12 and 14 August 1785. Grattan dismissed the bill as “an incipient and a creeping union; a virtual union” in a speech which secured extensive support from MPs. Only John Foster and John Fitzgibbon, officeholders in Dublin Castle, were able to estimate the economic merit of the bill. Fitzgibbon saw Grattan’s speech as merely a “slender consolation for poverty”, and described opposition to the bill as typical Whiggish conduct. 6

William Drennan, one of the future founders of the United Irishmen, who had already been involved with the parliamentary reform movement, made some comments on the issue in his private letters. He is a good example of radical opinion at that stage. While he welcomed the size of the opposition to the bill, he expressed himself as dissatisfied with the patriotic opposition. He saw their real motivation as self-interested, because the bill “threatened their properties”, and foresaw that, by the same token, they would be “as much self-interested against Reform as its enemies are, ... because the Reform would, by increasing general liberty, lessen their own power”. Drennan also commented

4 Tone, Life I, p.32.
5 James Kelly, Prelude to Union, p.87.
that Ireland would “never become a great or a happy people” without separation from Britain, and that, if it was utterly impracticable to conclude a commercial treaty with Britain, Ireland would choose either union or separation in the end. 7 He went on to say that “the mutual interest of two kingdoms” could not be obtained “by so close connection”, but only by perfect independence of each other. Too much significance, however, should not be attached to this remark. 8 In reality, it was an expression of an idealistic principle, rather than an awareness of a subjugating mechanism within the Anglo-Irish connection. It arose from his detestation of self-interested politicians in Protestant aristocracy, who enjoyed privileges in the legislative independence of their native land. As Caroline Robbins notes of Drennan in _The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman_, his ardor for virtue and independence stemmed from an ideal of civic humanism, which can be seen in his wording: for instance, “the segregation of the sincere and sanguine reformers from the rest ... a means of perpetuating the best and noblest of political objects in the minds of the best and boldest men in the country”. His distrust of the patriotic opposition came from the same source. For him, the Volunteers and America were the symbol of civic virtue: “why we should not be as America I have never seen any substantial reason”. 9 For A.T.Q. Stewart, “his politics were imbued with an ardent patriotism which led him to see in separation from Britain Ireland’s only opportunity for happiness”. This is, however, too much a simplification. The civic humanism tradition in Northern radical thought, which derived from the Scottish enlightenment, should be carefully distinguished from “patriotism” in a broad and loose sense. At the same time, it should be carefully distinguished from the new radical claim of separation from the British empire like Tone’s and O’Connor’s, because of differences in its basis.

Despite the anxiety of both administrations for a new Anglo-Irish connection in trade and manufactures, whenever trade matters were proposed in the parliament after the commercial propositions in 1785, patriotic opposition stood firm without any alternative long-term prospects for Irish trade and manufactures coming forward. Although the majority of MPs, as Kelly points out, did not see the Anglo-Irish connection as “the main item on the political agenda in the late 1780s”, it is this issue which led Tone and O’Connor to criticise the old patriotic Whig opposition, and to assert their new

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7 _The Drennan Letters_, p.36.
8 There is room for question in James Kelly’s understanding that Drennan “claimed that the British connection was one of the main obstacles in the way of reform”:. James Kelly, _Prelude to Union_, p.201.
nationalism.  

5.1 A Milestone towards Anti-imperialism: Wolfe Tone in 1790-91

The Nootka Sound Crisis in May of 1790, an affair in which Spain captured British merchant ships at Nootka Sound off the North American coast, gave Tone an opportunity to consider the disadvantage of Anglo-Irish connection. Concerning a response to the crisis, public opinion in England was divided for or against a declaration of war with Spain. Stimulated by the rising political temperature, Tone wrote his second pamphlet *Spanish War*, and then a few essays on 29 June 1790. The latter were originally designed as a contribution to a pamphlet for a political club, but some of them were actually written before the establishment of the club. In the club formed in 1790, William Johnson, Laurence Parsons and Thomas Russell also planned to contribute the pamphlets. Two of his essays, one *On the English Connection*, the other *On the state of Ireland in 1790*, as well as his second pamphlet, are noteworthy in terms of development of his political view. Tone revealed the drawbacks for the Irish nation in the actual system of the British empire.

He saw the settlement in 1782 as an apparent revolution which established the existing anti-democratic and corrupt system. Although it had been seen as a sort of revolution in Ireland, he said, such a belief was a "confusion of attribute", and in practice the settlement led to Ireland being "governed by two or three obscure individuals of another country, on maxims, and with views totally foreign to her interests". He described the existing government of Ireland as composed of "some insignificant English Minister, who presides ... some obsequious tool of the British Minister, who proposes", and "a rabble of the most profligate of our countrymen, who execute his mandates". These native countrymen could gain places as their reward, by the authority of the Lord Lieutenant. Assuming that common interests had really existed between both kingdoms, the people of Ireland could have welcomed the altered system, which was supposed to effectively co-ordinate the two parts of the empire. However, Tone dismissed this assumption as false, and said: "We have seen that assertion contradicted by experience, more than once already". The united system of the executive had worked only to secure the interests of Irish aristocracy, not those of the Irish nation. At this stage, although he had not

10 James Kelly, *Prelude to Union*, p.244.
12 Tone, "On the English connection", in *Life I*, p. 546.
13 Ibid., p.548.
14 Tone, "Essay on the State of Ireland in 1790", ibid., p.554.
reached realisation of the existence of internal exploiters, Tone implicitly was aware of those who had secured their own interests from the imperial administration in the name of legislative independence in return for their acceptance of the priority of British interests in the Irish parliament. He observed: “the interest of the Government and of the nation drag different ways, and with the purpose of the nation and the patronage of the crown appended to one scale, it is easy to foresee which will preponderate”.  

From the spring to the early summer of 1790, the civic-humanist and the political-economic perspectives mingled in Tone’s views. Between May and July, while strongly interested in the empire’s foreign policy, he sought a way to end the impasse in the reform movement. His surviving fragments of that time show his attempt to analyse the actual state of Ireland from various aspects: historical formation of the Anglo-Irish connection, political and economic relations with foreign countries, the defects of the actual political system, the results and prospects of political movement, and so on. Widening his perspective beyond his original legal sphere, he recognised that private interests had motivated politicians, even if they were in opposition, and that their partiality had damaged the interests of the nation. On 20 June, 1790, he wrote in his memorandum that the political sentiment in the middling ranks was “stifled and suppressed, as much as possible, by the expensive depravity and corruption” of those who constituted the legislature, and that whatever had been done, had been by the lesser self-interested people, “when informed of their interests by such men as Swift, Flood, Grattan etc.”. However, with all his sharpened interest in political economy, his expression strongly conveys his civic-moralist sentiments in opposition to self-interest.

Concerning the empire, one of his four essays, On the English connection, is a notable expansion of his view. It was dated 29 June, 1790. This draft seems to have been written simultaneously with, or right after Spanish War! Moreover, another two essays: On the State of Ireland in 1720 and On the state of Ireland in 1790 also can be seen to have been written at that time, because of the similarity of topics to those in his memorandum of 4 August 1790, in which he referred to Swift, Flood and Grattan in a context of the improvement of constitutional reform. The last of the four essays, On the necessity of domestic union, can be regarded as having been written after the establishment of the club. Although Marianne Elliott, stressing the influence of Drennan and Pollock, both members of the club, on Tone, finds no originality in the essay, Tone’s argument was not a product of their influence, because the most important point of the essay (the “English Government here was founded, has been

16Tone, “Fragments of Memorandums Previous to 1791”, ibid., p.138.
supported, and now exists but in the disunion of Irishmen") had been put forward in one of his earlier essays which he had written before he became acquainted with them. 17 His critical attitude towards Britain stemmed not from his emotional anti-Englishness - as Elliott suggests -, but from his awareness of the disadvantage of the existing British imperial system, which encouraged vested interests to maintain the empire. The fact that until the end of November Tone maintained contact with the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, presenting his ideas about an alternative foreign policy, shows that he had formed his own principles for political reform. During 1790, his chief concern was to find the principles for a new global political system which secured real common interests among nations, and the way to alter the relationship with Britain in accordance with these principles. In the process of consideration of that subject, Tone realised the system established in 1782 itself was a breeding ground of corruption and vice, which had indirectly made legislative independence only nominal. In contrast to him, Drennan did not see the 1782 revolution and its settlement in themselves as aristocratic in its motivation.

Despite her substantial research, Elliott did not see a turning point in the development of Tone’s political thought. If we follow her portrayal of Tone in 1790, in which his anti-Englishness is supposed to have led him to call for patriotic independence from the empire, we would be faced with some incompatibility in his conduct and view, because, as mentioned above, at the same time, he recommended British officials to establish a military colony and to send an expeditionary force to South America, wishing himself to go there as a member of the expedition. Elliott sees this as an absurdity attributed to his eagerness for fame and status, and to his militaristic tendency. She underestimates Tone’s political thought at this stage. Although she recognises “a considerable change on the constitutional issue since Spanish War!“18, she considers the change not a theoretical improvement, but only a call for Catholic emancipation and a much more positive anti-Englishness 19; she attributes the former to Russell’s influence, and the latter to Pollock’s and Drennan’s. Chronologically, as well as theoretically, there is some room for questioning her view. Instead, if we suppose that at that time he sought an alteration of the imperial system to a “common wealth”, his conduct would appear consistent.

In later years, analysing the incompleteness of the revolution of 1782, Tone developed the argument on the imperial political system further. In his fragment from 1793, entitled Reasons why the Question of Parliamentary Reform Has Always Failed in the Irish Legislature, he boldly made a case

18 Elliott, Wolfe Tone, p. 103.
19 Elliott, Wolfe Tone, p. 105.
against the system resulting from the settlement of 1782: "an easier and more plausible method to effectuate her [i.e. England's] purpose". As he explained its mechanism:

An English Secretary had the command of the Irish Treasury, to purchase Irish liberty and Irish commerce, from an Irish parliament. Ancient villainies were acted under new names. The mischief which had been done, gratuitously, by England, was now perpetuated by venal majorities, paid with the money of Ireland, whose interests were sacrificed. By a kind of circular process of destruction, the nation was loaded with taxes, for the purpose, not of maintaining, but of abridging, her natural rights.

Tone went on to say that gentlemen had purchased their seats in parliament in a borough-market, where a seat "was now worth £2,000; and, on an emergency, perhaps, £3,000", and that the Lord Lieutenant did not oppose, because he knew that, even if the gentlemen paid such high prices for their seats, they had reason to be reimbursed by means of the pensions and places he would grant; in return, the Lord Lieutenant secured his freedom to carry out his British-interested policy, and it "was not fettered by any consideration how his grants should be made good, for he well knew that neither his country [i.e. England] and himself would ever be called for a shilling", because MPs recouped the extra expenditure on pensions and places by additional taxes on the Irish nation. Noting that "the trade of Parliament was that, of all others, which experienced the most immediate and rapid improvement from the Revolution of 1782", he remarked ironically that it had been the principal benefit accomplished by the labours of the Irish nation, and by the risks they took.

This is Tone's clearest comment on the 1782 system. It can be summarised as follows: corruption, that is to say, the unconstitutional influence of the Lord Lieutenant, had worked as a sort of security device for Britain, which showed its actual effects especially when a clash of interests took place between Ireland and Britain. By the same token, assuming it to be a fact that the British administration ignored the structural vices of Irish political system on purpose, Irish political reformers could not expect administrators to advance Irish political conditions towards the liberal, democratic and civilised ones, that Britain had achieved for herself; rather the British connection had only evil influences. From this view, it follows that the establishment of a completely separated system from Britain was indispensable to a real liberation of the Irish nation both internally and externally. Tone himself said in his reminiscences that he "soon found reason not to regret that the whigs had not thought me an object worthy of their cultivation", because he discovered, while he was writing the essays, that "the influence of England was the radical vice" of the Irish

20 Tone, "Reasons Why the Question of Parliamentary Reform has Always Failed in the Irish Legislature" (a unfinished fragment), ibid., p.488f..
Furthermore, this viewpoint was reflected clearly in the first item of the Declaration and Resolutions of the Society of United Irishmen of Belfast, which he drew up. 22

Concerning his essays of 1790, two other questions remain untouched in the preceding argument: his attitude towards military power, and his global foreign policy. These two are related to each other. On the English Connection shows his awareness of British military power, which had implicitly threatened to make Ireland subject to Britain. Seeing the power of Great Britain in Ireland before 1782 as “well established by laws of her own enacting, fleets of her own building, and armies of her own raising”, Tone declared that Ireland submitted, “because she could not resist, not because she did not see that her interest was sacrificed”. 23 Furthermore, Tone recognised a deficiency of the indispensable elements of a sovereign state in the Irish polity: no court, no ambassadors, no navy, no army. In his view, this deficiency, depriving the natives of zeal for improvement of their home land, had degraded Ireland, while an absentee king and a temporarily resident Lord Lieutenant felt less concern about Irish interests. If the administrators were native, or at least permanent residents, their natural motivation to seek their own interests could accord with the good of the nation, so that “the interests of the Minister and the country are forwarded by the same means”. 24

Here, the issue of parliamentary representation posed by the American colonies before its independence, should be recalled, in order to grasp Tone’s notions of “empire” and “colony”. 25 The British empire, as it called itself “the British Commonwealth”, was assumed to pursue common interests within the empire, and the members of its administration as well as of its parliament were believed to represent not only their locality, but the whole empire. The king stood for this impartiality, and the government had been as a mediator of the interests of each part of the empire. However, during the conflict with the American colonies, the fictitiousness of this representation became evident. As mentioned in Chapter 4 (pp.75-76), this was a structural contradiction between the representative system and the administrative function of the empire. Unless those who are dwelling in and sharing the political and economic environment become representative of the parts, the interests of the people cannot be secured, because a close link between the interests of the representatives themselves and of the people is necessary to ensure that

21 Tone, ibid., p.32.
22 Tone, ibid., p.367.
24 Ibid., p.548.
representatives naturally incline to improve their common interests. That realisation led to the claim posed by the colonists for actual representation. From this, the notion of actual representation of each part of the empire emerged, not only among MPs, but within the personnel of the administration.

If we avoid the nineteenth-century notion of nation state, which embraces “the organic, cultural and historical concepts of romanticism”, Tone’s idea of alternative commonwealth can be easily understood. His concept of nation meant simply all the inhabitants of a region, including native people and immigrants. More precisely, since Tone thought a nation was nothing but citizens of a society who were granted civic rights on the basis of civil duties, regardless of ethnicity, religious background or financial one, both natives and immigrants had the same possibility to be acknowledged as citizens. Civic duties meant labour and the militia, in which citizens were to be trained to observe the public good. This is a typical idea of civic humanism. The civic humanism paradigm helps account for Tone’s adoration of the army, especially the Volunteer corps. Its pure military spirit, which was disciplined towards collectivity, attracted Tone. His idea of a new commonwealth was reflected in his plan of a military colony.

In July 1790 Tone met Thomas Russell in the public gallery of the House of Commons, and they stayed together during the summer. Influenced by Russell’s civic-humanist attitude, and disappointed at the paucity of his supportive audience and the lack of effect of his latest pamphlet, Tone abandoned further development of his argument based on political economy. His association with Russell stimulated his civic humanist tendency, and led him to make a plan for the establishment of a ideal “republic of civic virtue”. That is Proposals relative to the establishment of a military colony in the Sandwich Islands, and liberation of South America. This plan was an expanded version of Tone’s old proposal to “establish a colony” in the Sandwich Islands “on a military plan”, which he presented to Pitt, the Prime Minister, in 1788.

According to his memorandum dated 4 August when interference of the privy council in the Dublin mayoral election became a target of public criticism, he was both indignant and irritated at the indifference of the members at the Bar towards the political issues. As if escaping from the dreadful reality of the Irish political condition, Tone put a shape on his ideal. During the autumn of 1790 he tried to convince the Duke of Richmond, Master of the Ordnance, and Lord Grenville, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to adopt his plan.

A series of essays on the establishment of a military colony in the

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27 Tone, Life I, p.26f.
28 Ibid., p.140.
Sandwich Islands and the liberation of Spanish America, convey Tone's idiosyncratic attitude towards politics. So far as the development of his argument is concerned, the relation between the two topics is merely ad hoc; it simply shows his desperate expedients for a basis of negotiation with the British officials; nevertheless each of them is informative in terms of his political view. The former topic tells us his ideal of classical republic, which is the core of civic humanism; the latter gives us a clue to his internationalism.

Let us now look at his plan of settlement from the aspect of formation of a community. For the first of his plans, Tone qualified settlers: 500 young men under the age of thirty, selected from different regiments, and 5000 men voluntary participants, who would follow "such trades as may appear most necessary in an infant colony". Although each settler was supposed to be armed on landing, he said, the officer "should labor most strenuously to gain the friendship of the natives, and, in process of time, should try the experiment of training a few battalions, like our Seapoys in India". The settlers were to obtain a sufficient quantity of land "from the natives by purchase, for the erection of a fort and other necessary buildings, and, if possible, for the raising of corn, vegetables, &c. for the use of the garrison". The colony was supposed to subsist from its own resources for the future. He said that the idea of a purely military colony was drawn from that of ancient Rome, and explained its principles as follows:

In a word, the idea is to construct a settlement on somewhat of [sic] feudal principles, to reward military attendance and exertion by donative lands, to train the rising generation to arms and danger, to create a small but impenetrable [sic] nation of soldiers, where every man should have a property, and arms and spirit to defend it, to temper the ferocity of the natives by the arts of European culture... 30

We may say that this view is no more militaristic than Rousseau's concept of republic and the national policy of Switzerland. 31

While his notion of an ideal polity was deeply influenced by civic humanism, the ideology of commerce (political economy) coloured his view on external policy. In the plan presented in his letter to the Duke of Richmond on 20 September 1790, he actually referred to the profits which the British empire would gain by plundering the Spanish colonies after expelling the military force of Spain. However, he withdrew the plan, for the reason that it was "no farther than invasion and plunder, to harass and distress Spain in case of war" 32, and in

30 On this point, see his own comment, Tone, Life I, p.533.
31 Tone, "Plan of a Settlement in the Sandwich Island", ibid., p.524.
32 If we should point out a fatal mistake in it from today's point of view, apart from his Eurocentric tone, it is his implicit neglect of the property of natives in the land. Assuming that it is the same question between the Anglo-Saxon immigrants and the native Americans, it might not be his personal sin. However, in Ireland, the same question had already taken shape in Ulster, and Samuel Barber was aware of it in 1786.
his letter to the Duke of Richmond on 12 November 1790 presented a new plan for the subversion of Spanish government in South America, in support of liberation of the oppressed people there: "the Spanish colonists would rejoice at an opportunity of liberating themselves, is it necessary to do more than mention the boundless advantages which would result to England from an unshackled commerce with South America". 33 Emphasising that the British interests would be advanced by "a wise and equitable treaty of commerce", which was supposed to be established in the wake of the liberation, Tone tried to convince the two ministers of the advantage and justice of a military confrontation with Spain, coincident with an uprising of the colonists, and suggested the possibility of forming a secret alliance with the United States. His view on foreign affairs at that stage is reflected in the following passage:

The object proposed is, a free Republic in South America, with her liberty guarantied [sic] by England and North America, and a fair and equitable treaty of commerce between the three nations, which would, in effect, though not in form, exclude the rest of the world. 34

While Tone found "mutual interest" as the "most infrangible tie between nations", he was aware of bright and dark sides to a policy of free trade: immediate political liberation and indirect economic confinement. In his proposal, he commented that free trade was a more civilised strategy for aggrandizement of the British empire, than immediate exploitation. He remarked that Britain had two ways to confront Spain: one was an immediate attack on the plundering system in South America by armed force, the other was undermining the economic base of the Spanish empire by "a free and unshackled trade", which would "in the lapse of a few years, blow her empire into the air ... more slowly, but more certainly, beneficially and honorably". 35 From this, it is clear that Tone relied upon the economic power of Britain, and accepted the imperial system, as far as it was deserving to be called "commonwealth", under which, while the countries within it might be confined within the imperial economy, they shared mutual interests on an equal basis. He thought that the maintenance of this mutuality required sovereignty of each country, which included its own independent government and military force. His idea of a new imperial system was, in brief, the machinery of economic and military mutual aid among sovereign states.

Tone submitted his second proposal to the ministers after he fundamentally revised his initial plan. The change in his view can be attributed to Thomas Attwood Digges. Until Tone himself withdrew his first proposal, there had been no perspective of liberation of "people" in his view. He indeed expressed his admiration for the national spirit the people of Ireland showed in

33 Ibid., p.536.
34 Ibid., p.537.
the events of 1782, but, his historical portrayal of the event in his former writings was highly idealised by patriotic sentiment; in fact, it excluded the existence of politicised people. When he mentioned heavy taxes, his chief concern was not people's sufferings, but subordination of Ireland to Britain. He took little account of the actual state of people, or mass politicisation, before he exchanged views with Digges. Digges was an American and "became acquainted with Russell" in Belfast in 1790. According to Tone, Digges "had, during the war which terminated in the emancipation of his country, served Congress in various official situations". Tone first met Digges in his visit to Belfast in October 1791. The two men had corresponded through Russell before then. In admiration of Digges, Tone portrayed him as "a man who, to a most ardent zeal for liberty and a universal regard for the welfare of man, joined the most cool, reflecting head, the most unshaken resolution, a genius fertile in expedients, and a most consummate knowledge of commerce and politics". Digges's influence on Tone and Russell has been underestimated in the Irish historiography of the United Irishmen, because of the fact that Russell and William Drennan threw suspicion on him that he was the informer who gave the government a copy of Tone's letter to Russell in the summer of 1791, which referred to the separation of Ireland from England. However, as Marianne Elliott points out, "Digges ... was right in his analysis" and an indispensable factor for the radicalisation of Tone's view.

Fortunately, Tone left a detailed description of the information given by Digges, which tells us how the national liberation campaign in South America made Tone aware of an international liberation movement. As a result, Tone came across the international wave of democracy for the first time, and got some idea of a new colonial nationalism to unite people with different ethnicities in their endeavour to establish an independent state. This was the germ of Tone's future policy, as he himself mentioned. The memorandum suggested a few of the notable features of political conditions in Peru. First, the native Americans felt repulsion towards the conquerors and immigrants, as well as

38 Tone, Life I, p.529.
38 Elliott, Wolfe Tone, p.100
39 Tone, ibid., p.537.
40 As early as 1780, Peru experienced a rebellion based on the union between Indians and poorer colonists. According to John Lynch, in Peru, "the different worlds of whites and Indians co-existed in uneasy proximity. Yet rebellion in Peru was not exclusively Indian. Although Indians from the towns and surrounding sierra joined the protest in their hundreds, more significant was the participation of poorer creoles and mestizos, chulos and other castes, resentful of the extension of tribute status to themselves. The rebellion in La Paz called for unity of the kind shown by the North American colonists"("The origins of Spanish American Independence", Leslie Bethell (ed.) The Cambridge History of Latin America, vol. III, Cambridge UP, 1985, p.37).
jealousy for their own old ethnic tradition. Secondly, a great part of Peru had never been conquered by Spain, and the power of the priests over the people was weaker than in Mexico. Thirdly, some priests were involved in the revolutionary movement, and went to the United States on a secret mission on behalf of the revolution. In terms of its influence on Tone's future policy, Digges's comment that in the event of an expedition by a British fleet the priests should be the first object to influence is noteworthy: through them it may be easily communicated to the people that the expedition is not meant for conquest or plunder, nor to deprive any one of his property, but merely to shake off the Spanish yoke, and make the people their own masters.

In Mexico, in contrast with Peru, the priests had mainly worked as suppressive agents of the people, and checked revolt. 

Such was Tone's memorandum about South America. Despite his zeal, he could not get a clear response from the ministers. Since the plan also overlapped with his own emigrant scheme, the unwelcome result brought him back to the Irish context. Towards the end of the year, he organised the political club mentioned in the previous section and started again to set out his ideas on the political system of the empire in the essays to be contributed to the club.

How Tone and Russell were influenced by the information given by Digges was reflected in Tone's next pamphlet Catholics. An Argument on the Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland, and in Russell's journals of February and March 1791.

Tone's essay On the Necessity of Domestic Union, which is supposed to have been written between the autumn of 1790 and winter of the next year, also shows a change of his perspective about division among Irish people. In his previous writings, he pointed out that the partial interests of some venal politicians damaged Ireland's general interests and independence. In the essay, he further got down to a question of the social structure, which had produced those partial interests: that is a sentiment of repulsion between the natives and the immigrants, which was caused not only by economic reasons, but cultural and religious ones; their jealousy and contempt had so long brought about a deep rift among the people. Tone pointed out that one party had looked for contemptible advantages and unjust power, while the others had so long been "cowed and rebuked" that they appeared to have lost their spirit; "the hand of foolish and wicked tyranny" damaged the generous energies of their nature. "Instead of watching the insidious arts of our Government here", he said, "we are watching each other". In the essay, although he did not touch on the means of reconciliation among the people of Ireland, at least he began advocating national union for the sake of the general wealth and interests of Ireland.

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41 Tone, ibid., p.537-41.
From the winter to the summer of 1791, Tone tackled the problem of religious division among the Irish people. His solution was presented in *Catholics: An Argument on the Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland*. Digges's information about South American colonies drove Tone and Russell to change their view on the present state of Ireland. They began to see their native land as a colony of England rather than as an independent kingdom. Especially, since Russell living in Belfast had the closer association with Digges, he was strongly stimulated to awareness of the miserable conditions of Ireland. His journals during the winter and spring show his awareness of various social problems: no legal protection and social aid to the lower order, the abuse by those in a predominant class of their privileges; the indolent attitude of MPs towards the industrial development of Ireland and the subjection of MPs to the priority of English interests. Russell and Digges exchanged their views on the practicability of separation from the British empire, in March or April. This fact does not mean that Russell was in advance of Tone, because Russell's political and social perspective was a millenarian levellerism, too naive to build up any revolutionary programs. While his righteous indignation against the evils and ills of society may have encouraged the radicalisation of Tone's view in terms of democracy, theoretically the latter owed little to the former. Russell's memorandum on the conversation with Digges shows to what extent his idea of independence from Britain was substantial. Digges commented that the people of Ireland were dissipated and selfish, because they had some property and were unwilling to risk it. In contrast to them, he continued, "In America several who spent their whole fortunes persevered in necessity. If the war had terminated against them, [they] would have been in beggary. Not such a spirit here". Russell agreed with him on the improbability of separation on account of the self-interested and spiritless mentality of the people, and accepted Digges' suggestion that "parliamentary reform" was "the best way of beginning"; if the Catholics were "admitted to franchise", they "would become good citizens"; the Dissenters would not be "averse to admit them to privileges". Russell, unlike Tone, had not discovered an inseparable connection between the accomplishment of the parliamentary reform and the completion of independence of Ireland. The latter was, for Russell, a matter of morale. Furthermore, his favourable view of the influence of Christianity on politics, fundamentally differed from Tone's. Elliott's assimilation of Tone to Russell does not take this difference in their social perspectives. Tone wrote in early December of 1790 that all risings in South America "were suppressed, not by the power of Spain, but by the priests, who are omnipotent in South

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42 Russell, ibid., p.35f.
44 Ibid., p.39.
America”. He was a secularist, and tried to distinguish religious matter from secular affairs, more precisely, to remove the religious veil of social issues. For him, whatever the religious sect, it was unacceptable that religious authority enjoyed secular power, and that people were deprived of their civil rights for religious reasons, because religious power, once it was connected with secular one, easily would turn to abuse for partial interests.

On the other hand, Russell wrote of the government of Paraguay in February of the following year that it is “the only government ever set up by a priesthood - those supposed to be the most ambitious race in the world - and yet the government is beyond compare the best, the happiest that ever has been instituted”, and that Christianity formed the morals of the people there. He concluded that Christianity was not supported by Tyranny, but Tyranny perverted Christianity from its purpose and debased its purity, in order to secure power for itself. This argument was enough to vindicate Roman Catholics, who had been “accused of being subservient and to the purpose of Tyranny”. However, provided that Christianity does not serve as a tool of tyranny, the fusion of religious authority and secular power, if it produces good effects like in the government of Paraguay, is acceptable for him. This view was different from Tone’s. Russell’s opinion that if Christianity had bad effects in a society, it was not because of Christianity itself, but of its distortion by tyranny, could not offer any guidelines for forming a coordinated society which embraced different religious sects. Once a Christian sect is distorted and used as a tool by tyranny, it itself, mixing up its ideological power with secular political one, oppresses other sects. Therefore, in such a situation, an argument as to the good and evil of Christianity in nature gives no help to resistance. As the excellent study by Franco Venturi points out, a main stream of European enlightenment thought since 1760 had made a distinction between sin and crime, guilt and offence, and proposed the establishment of a principle that churches should concern themselves with sin, whereas states should “estimate and make good the damage which the breaking of the law had caused the individual and society”. This was a necessary principle for liberation from religious discrimination: “Penal law was to lose all its sacred content”. In Ireland, however, this principle was not common knowledge even among long standing reformers at that time. Some might consciously dismiss it as in conflict with the Protestant constitution, others were not able to break down the

45 In Paraguay, the Jesuits “had a fortified enclave; their ownership of haciendas and other forms of property gave them independent economic power which was enhanced by their successful entrepreneurial activities”(Lynch, ibid., p.10). For the source of Russell’s knowledge of Paraguay, see C.J.Woods’s footnote in Russell, ibid., p.37.

46 Ibid., p.37.

unconsciously assumed framework of the Protestant constitution, which provided for the union of church and state. Russell was one of the latter.

Russell and Tone, although they certainly influenced each other, differed in fundamental ideology. Their difference was also reflected in their evaluation of Thomas Paine’s *The Rights of Man*. Russell wrote down his doubts about Paine’s principles. His understanding of the pamphlet was so strongly influenced by the British public opinion of those days, which overwhelmingly supported Burke, that he failed to grasp any radical and democratic ideas in Paine’s thoughts. His remark, which accepted Burke’s argument, rather shows the naivety of his political perspective. He saw the power of the national assembly in France as absolute and despotic, and feared that the power oppressed individuals and their property. Pitying the middle class, he pessimistically observed:

In a violent revolution thousands are reduced to beggary. ... Those who were in poverty had their minds assimilated to it [the whole society]; they derived probably part of their support from those who are impoverish’d. Their situation is truely deplorable. 48

Here, Russell, without reservation, believed Burke’s view that the masses were exploiting the properties and privileges of other classes in revolutionary France. At that stage, he had no basis to share a long term political program with Tone.

On the other hand, Tone had been developing the framework of his farsighted project for the real liberation of people under a new independent state. Tone has not been seen as radical in 1790, before the establishment of the United Irish Society in Belfast: for instance, Marianne Elliott stresses Russell’s influence, and Frank MacDermot even remarks that “Tone was so far actually less radical than Drennan”. 49 At that time, however, Tone had already adverted to the limitation of the conventional framework of the reform movement, which failed to address itself to the defects in the Protestant constitution, and recognised that the the subjugation of Ireland to Britain resulted not only from political causes, but military ones. Informed by Digges that there was some possibility to form alliance with the United States, he planned to make common cause with other oppressed nations for their liberation from old empires. If the Irish people took such a common and general line, he supposed, Ireland, linking up with an existing international liberation movement, could get foreign military aid to deter the British administration from interference in Ireland. In August of 1796, Tone still expressed his regretful sentiments on the British administration’s neglect of his plan in 1788 for an expeditionary force to the Sandwich Islands. He said: “I made something like a vow, that, if ever I had an opportunity, I would make Mr. Pitt sorry, and perhaps fortune may yet enable

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48 Russell, ibid., p.43.
me to fulfill that resolution”. 50 Indeed, given his anti-Englishness after his exile in 1795, the sentiments has been seen as in Elliott’s argument the influence of frustrated ambition on him, as, but, as I have argued in this chapter, his ambition concerned less his personal promotion and fame than participation in the liberation campaign in South America as a man of liberty supported by the British empire. In his letters and memorial to the Duke of Richmond on 12 November 1790 and to Lord Grenville on 7 December 1790, the British empire was portrayed as a new empire which would liberate people from the old empire (Spain) and promote the public welfare. However, the ministers would not adopt his plan for liberation. His chagrin is explicit in his sentiments - probably written when he abandoned negotiation with the ministers at the end of 1790- which said: “if the principles laid down, and the conjectures made in it, be verified, as I hope, for the honor of the nature I share in, much more than my private gratification, they may be by the fact”. 51

As Tone’s protracted negotiation with the ministers shows, he had regarded the imperial administration as a possible supporter of liberation until early December of 1790. Then, he became disappointed at the attitude of the ministers in the imperial administration. Besides, the parliamentary debate in the session of 1791 made Tone renounce the existing political system, including the parliamentary opposition and its reform movement. Although the year before Tone, stressing the damage to Irish trade, had made a case against a declaration of war with Spain, the leaders of the Whig club, neglecting the disadvantage of Ireland, “favoured standing or falling by England”. 52 In the session of 1791, however, the Whig club argued against the restriction of Irish trade by the British government, which was one of the main planks of the party’s platform. On 21 February, Grattan posed the issue of exclusion of Irish merchants from the East Indian trade, and William Brabazon Ponsonby seconded a motion that representatives of Ireland joined a committee of trade of the British government. Although they advocated opening the monopolised market of the East Indian trade to Irish merchants, they based their claim merely on legislative independence in the 1782 system. Furthermore, Curran, attributing the recent good results in South American trade to the cooperation of the administrations both of Ireland and Britain under the same king, claimed that Ireland should secure its equal footing with Britain in the whole sphere of foreign trade of the empire. However, their claim of equal opportunity totally omitted an estimation of their actual economic advantages and disadvantages of Ireland. For example, the shallowness of their economic view can be seen in the opinion of John Ormsby Vandeule, MP for the Borough of Granard. He

50 Ibid., p.27.
51 Ibid., p.537.
52 McDowell, Irish Public Opinion..., p.139.
observed: "by an East India trade riches have flowed into Great Britain, and if we were to carry on a trade to the east, the consequence would be, that riches in a short period of time would flow into the kingdom [i.e. Ireland]." In his eyes, the grass is always greener on the other side. Members of the Whig club did not take into account the fact that the maintenance of the empire, while producing riches, entailed great expense upon the British government. To stand on the same footing with Great Britain meant to share the expense equally. The conduct of the opposition was totally hypocritical and inconsistent, because at the critical moment of the war with Spain, their decision, giving priority to British interests, ignored the disadvantages of Irish foreign trade. Moreover, through the shallowness of the patriotic claim which was revealed by imperialistic constitutionalists in the parliamentary debate, their policy might damage Irish trade. If the parliamentary opposition was so unreliable, it only underlined the depth of servility of the supporters of the administration.

Tone was totally disappointed at imperial and domestic politics during the winter of 1791. Paine's *The Rights of Man* came out in March. This book gave him a new framework of politics. The pamphlet, pointing out the impossibility of political reform within the conventional framework, declared:

The right to reform is in the nation in its original character, and the constitutional method would be by a general convention elected for the purpose. There is, moreover, a paradox in the idea of vitiated bodies reforming themselves.

In addition to this defect in representation in Parliament, the pamphlet adverted to the fatal effects of pensions and places. Informing his readers that the National Assembly of France had banned MPs from being officers of the government, placemen, or pensioners, Paine criticised the political system of Britain for "the government of loaves and fishes", which had exploited the nation in a more civilised and plausible mode than despotic taxation, because:

the Parliament, imperfectly and capriciously elected as it is, is nevertheless supposed to hold the national purse in trust for the nation: but the manner in which an English parliament is constructed, it is like a man being both mortgager and mortgagee.

Since, as mentioned above, Tone had already made these points on his own, he was quick to grasp the gist of the pamphlet, and became convinced of the prospects of his project. The epilogue of *The Rights of Man* encouraged him to carry out the plan on the principle of internationalism, as if it were sent to himself:

From what we now see, nothing of reform in the political world ought to be held improbable.... The intrigue of Courts, by which the system of war is kept up, may provoke a confederation of Nations to abolish it: and an European Congress, to patronise the progress of free Government, and promote the civilisation of Nations with each other, is an event nearer in

54 Thomas Paine, *The Right of Man*, p. 73.
55 Ibid., p. 76.
probability, than once were the Revolution and Alliance of France and America. It was the basis for his renouncement of the ideal of the British empire as “commonwealth”, which, more than the claim of natural rights of man, was the lesson Tone drew from the pamphlet.

Furthermore, the pamphlet, in which more than half the pages described how oppressed people were, and how they rose against oppression at the fall of the Bastille, provided the Irish people with the words which made them realise their own misery and subjugation: the pamphlet worked as a primer. Tone said in his autobiography that the controversy caused by the pamphlet inspired people, because, unlike Britain, “an oppressed, insulted, and plundered nation” of Ireland “well knew, experimentally, what it was to be enslaved”. 57

The matter of Irish foreign trade and the ongoing and spreading revolutionary movement in France and on the continent, can be seen as very important factors in the radicalisation of Tone and O’Connor. The political situation in Europe between 1792 and 93, indicating that a pan-European alliance of civil revolution might get rid of the old imperial powers, convinced them that Paine’s expectation of alliance among France, America and other liberation powers in Europe, such as Jacobin clubs in Rhineland and Hungary, would come true. Especially, the decree passed by the the French National Convention on 19 November 1792 “in answer to various petitions from the Rhineland soliciting French protection”, which promised “friendship and assistance” to all peoples wishing to recover their liberty”, assured the feasibility of the alliance. 58 In contrast to this, a series of events in Britain, the Brunswick Manifesto in 1792 and consequent intervention of the British empire in French domestic affairs launched in alliance with other empires on the continent. Brunswick’s defeat at Valmy in 1793, increased taxes to finance military spending from 1792 onwards, Burke’s insistence on continuation of the war and his breakaway from the left-wing Whigs, led them to regard the British empire as an impediment to civilisation and liberation in Ireland.

An assumption that the interests of Irish foreign trade could be secured only under the patronage of the British empire, had long been held by politicians. During the dispute over the commercial propositions in 1785, Fitzgibbon, attorney general at that time, in face of the optimistic opinion of patriotic opposition that Ireland could “trade to more advantage with the colonies of foreign states”, remarked that no foreign state would allow Ireland to trade with its own colonies: neither Spain admitted outside trades into Mexico, nor Portugal

56 Ibid., p. 146f.
57 Tone, Life I, p.43.

into Brazil; it was only Britain which was to protect the rights of Ireland on its behalf if they were violated. This statement represented a typical opinion of the necessity of imperial aid, one held in common by MPs on both sides of the parliament. However, in 1790, Tone, taking counter-examples, revealed the falseness of the argument. When “American privateers harassed and plundered” Irish trade during the War of Independence, he said, England neglected the security of Ireland. Furthermore, drawing on the arguments against the Anglo-Irish connection proposed in the Commercial Propositions of 1785, he said: “we were le~ at last, and not without a long and strenuous opposition from the British Minister in Ireland, to extort justice as we might, for ourselves, by a heavy duty on the wines of Portugal”. Because Portugal, regarding Ireland as outside the terms of the Anglo-Portuguese commercial treaty, declined to accept some Irish textiles in 1780, the dispute was protracted over the 1780s. Some people saw the attitude of the British administration towards its responsibility of safeguarding Irish interests as highly unreliable. Especially the failure of the British navy to guard the Irish coast offered evidence for it. On the other hand, the Navigation Acts banned Irish merchants from re-exporting commodities of colonial origin, and the monopoly of the East India Company prevented Irish merchants from being engaged in East Indian trade, which meant Ireland was excluded from almost all long-distance foreign trades. These drawbacks in Anglo-Irish relations formed an undercurrent of doubt and anxiety as to the consequences of a closer relationship between the two countries. The Dublin Evening Post perceptively pointed out the real source of the uneasy feeling:

It is asked, should Ireland make treaties with foreign powers, how will she punish any infraction of those treaties, without a fleet? ... but our maintaining soldiers for the service of Great Britain does give us a right to call upon her navy. ...Ireland has no right to share in British treaties - Ireland has no claim on the British navy - Ireland has no participation of the Navigation laws. In God’s name, what advantage has Ireland by her connexion with Great Britain?

As James Kelly says, “the absence of Irish consular representation abroad” was a fatal defect in diplomatic terms. Regardless of the decision-making of the nation, Ireland was automatically involved in the foreign affairs of Britain, because, as part of the sovereign authority of the Irish Crown, Ireland was merged with the authority of the British Crown and lacked a corresponding diplomatic sovereignty. As long as Europe was governed by a few old empires, and as foreign trade had still little importance for economic development, the lack of independence of the Irish Crown was not important. However, once the

59 P.R., V(1785), p.380.
60 Tone, “Spanish War!”, Life I, p.338.
old imperial order was shaken by the Independence Revolution of nations, and
the notion of national wealth spread, the halfway independence system of
Ireland in 1782 revealed all its weakness and instability: that is to say, unless
Ireland had its own economy and exchequer independent of Britain, it was
incompetent to deal with its own foreign affairs. Therefore, for the sake of its
future prosperity, complete economic union or complete independence was the
only choice: the former would be inconsistent with legislative independence,
whereas the latter would challenge the existing constitution, and induce Britain
to resort to force. In Spanish War!, Tone observed: “this union of the Executive
does by no means, ... imply so complete an union of power or interest, that an
injury, or a benefit to one, is an injury or a benefit to the other”. At that stage,
he was not set on a break away from the British empire. Drawing on the
continental notion of the union of Crowns under one head, he claimed that the
king, as King of Ireland, should take responsibility for one of his “electoral
dominions”. By analogy with the case of the King of Hungary, who was also
Grand Duke of Tuscany, he declared that Ireland had no more concern with a
British dispute, than the Tuscans had with Hungarian matters, and said: “no
man thinks that the Tuscans are bound to sacrifice their trade or their men in
his German quarrels”. a Furthermore, in A Liberty Weaver, on the Spanish War,
presumably written in the early autumn of 1790, he developed a subtle
argument on the independence of the Crown of Ireland from the British one.
Adopting the logic which the opposition in Parliament used for the justification of
the Regent of the Irish Crown in the constitutional crisis in the previous year, he
said:

“as Ireland is an imperial kingdom, the same as England, ... our King has the same rights in
making war or peace for Ireland, that he has for England; and that, if it should meet to his
royal wisdom to make terms of neutrality for Ireland, ... he would have a right to do so”.
Seeing their king as independent of England, he argued that, if so, “it would be
advisable for our two Houses of Parliament to address him to do so”, because it
was a duty for the people and parliament of Ireland “to make such
representations and remonstrances” to their own “Sovereign”. a In this
argument, Tone suggested the sole practicable way to re-establish the
sovereignty of Ireland within the existing constitution. In reality, as legislative
independence itself had become a mere form, there was no prospect of
realisation of his suggestion. However, this idea --re-establishment of
sovereignty by address to the king of Ireland-- was to be applied to the strategy
of the Catholic emancipation campaign and national movement as mentioned in
the following chapter.

aTone, “Spanish War!”, Life I, p.333.
bTone, “A Liberty Weaver, on the Spanish War”, Life I, p.562.
As to national independence, Tone’s letter to Russell dated 9 July 1791, withheld his real intention from readers; nevertheless, it can be found implicitly in his phrasing. In the letter, he said that he was intending to express his opinion to the extent that “it may be advisable to publish it ... in the present juncture”, and as if he had grasped the truth of the matter, he observed aloofly: “they certainly fall short of the truth, but truth itself must sometimes condescend to temporise”. Furthermore, he said that although he had an unalterable opinion that unless the connection between the two countries was broken off -- “the bane of Irish prosperity would remain in the influence of England” -- he had needed to reconcile it with the actual political condition, because it was “for the present too hardy”, though presumably it might be established “universally” in a short time. At that time, he involved himself with drawing up draft resolutions of the Society of United Irishmen, which was to be set up in Belfast in October of 1791. He spent all the spring and summer for its arrangement, as well as for development of his own project. During that period, he commented that the proceedings still did not fulfill his real intention:

I have not made it a part of the resolutions. I have only proposed to set up a reformed Parliament as a barrier against that mischief.... I have not said one word that looks like a wish for separation, though I give it to you and your friends as my most decided opinion that such an event would be a regeneration for this country.  

5.2 Parsons and O’Connor in 1792

In the parliamentary session of 1792, the Whigs again raised the East India trade question. George Ponsonby put forward a motion to “bring in a bill to repeal every law which prohibits a trade from Ireland to the countries lying eastward of the Cape of Good Hope”. 65 Understanding that the motion made by Grattan and Brabazon Ponsonby the year before was rejected for two reasons: one the want of capital to carry on India trade, the other apprehension that, if Ireland “exerted her rights to trade to India, it would injure England”, he remarked that the recent development in Irish trade increased the capital stock of Ireland; hence, the first reason did not matter any more. Then, opposing the second reason, he claimed that there was no need for “the representatives of an independent people” to oblige England: “I am not ready to surrender the rights of Ireland”. 66

Arthur O’Connor bitterly criticised the Whig policy in the debate on the motion. He remarked that to pose the question as a constitutional question or a

64 RIA, Burrowes Papers, MS23K53, Tone to Russell, on 9 July 1791; MacDermot, Theobald Wolf Tone..., p.71.
65 P.R., XII (1792), p.87.
66 Ibid., p.86f.
matter of contention between the two countries, made no practical sense, because, even if there was no restriction, the shortage of Irish capital for investment in long-distance trade prevented Irish merchants from engaging in the East India trade:

I call on the gentlemen at the opposite side of the House, who, session after session have held out such advantages to this country from an East-India trade, to inform us from which of those four branches in which our capital is at present employed, they would recommend to us to withdraw a shilling to place it in that most distant foreign trade to the East-Indies. 67

Regarding their appeal as only “a fit subject for popular incitement” 68, which embraced a lure of wealth in India and a stimulus of popular grievance caused by “restraint”, he warned them that their foreign trade policy would culminate in public unemployment, want and famine, and be seen in the end as “a mistake” made by the patriots. 69

Stressing the importance of an economic perspective of national wealth, O'Connor set out his own policy that “to increase the wealth of a nation most speedily”, the capital should be employed “in the most profitable ways”. In the case of Ireland, “agriculture, manufactures, a home trade, and near foreign trades”, were “infinitely more lucrative ways of employing capital than sending it on that most distant trade to China, which should never be undertaken by any country until it had a superabundance”. This was not only his commercial, but his political principle. His argument was drawn from Adam Smith’s theory in the Wealth of Nations, which declared the end of the monopolism of transatlantic empires because it hindered the natural development of the economy. From the outset, O’Connor’s chief concern was the demolition of the monopoly of the ancien régime. As mentioned above, seeing the political monopoly in Ireland as aristocratic, he had dismissed the existing parliamentary opposition as a part of the aristocracy in his speech the year before. His second attack on the aristocratic opposition was directed towards their global policy, which he saw as an optimistic view of the ad hoc profits that participation in a destructive imperial system on the equal footing with Britain would bring. In this speech, although he did not openly argue against the imperial policy, he presented his formula for a sensible social reform: if a temporary commercial restriction was “for the interest of Ireland”, it “should be continued, if not it should cease to be re-enacted”. Furthermore, pointing out that the interest of some Irish merchants was not compatible with that of their own country itself, he said: “Nor is the question, whether our merchants are willing to engage in the East India trade; but the question is, whether it is for the interest of Ireland to pursue the trade”. He himself advocated concentrating the capital in Ireland in

67 Ibid., p.99.
68 Ibid., p.101.
69 Ibid., p.100.
domestic industries and trades until the national wealth would increase enough
to cope with British economic power, for the reason that, in domestic trade, the
profits brought about by each exchange between products of home-labour,
remain within the country, “whereby our industry is doubly exited”. He
repeatedly warned MPs to realise the shortage of capital and the
underdevelopment of Ireland: he had perceived the disadvantages of Ireland, in
the event of eastern foreign market, formerly a monopoly of the East Indian
Company, being opened to Ireland. He observed:
It has been said, ... we can trade to India with English money, in which case it would have to
contend with British capital ... Are the Irish as cheap and as good as the British? I am sorry
as man can be, to say that the quantity of proof of our inferiority; here then is a speculation
founded upon disadvantages, founded upon the supposition of ignorance and folly in British
merchants. 70
Making a distinction between the national interests in making effective
investments of capital in commerce and manufacture and the private interests
of the Irish merchants driven by rivalry with British ones, he saw the Whigs as
merely dealing with the latter.

Following O'Connor's speech, Laurence Parsons made a case against the
motion from an economic aspect. He pointed out that not foreign trade itself,
but enlargement of the export market brought profits to the whole nation. The
drain of money from the country in exchange for imports would have the worst
effects on the national economy, therefore the tea-trade with China was the
worst one, which “required an export of money, and a return of manufacture, and
that too the slowest possible return”. After he identified the doctrine in
O'Connor’s argument as Adam Smith's, he alluded to the defeat of the
Commercial Propositions of 1785, which Pitt had planned in accordance with
Smith's doctrine. Parsons, as well as O’Connor, was aware of the foreseeable
disadvantage of free trade policy for Ireland. Parsons thought, if customs duties
and legal restrictions were removed completely, unless English merchants
emigrated to Ireland and invested their profit there, which he considered
improbable, the market which Irish merchants had held would be merged into
the British market and national wealth would be drained not only by absentee
landlords but by absentee merchants:
If this trade is thrown open, English merchants will employ their capitals in it. Now, this they
must do, by one of these two ways; either emigrating with capitals, or by remaining where
they are, and employing our merchants here as their factors. Now, if our merchants are only
to carry it on as the factors of English merchant, the main profits of the trade, whatever they
may be, must revert to England. 71
He emphasised that foreign trade involved imperial war, which Ireland could not

70 Ibid., p.100.
71 Ibid., p.104.
manage because of the lack of a fleet, and both material and human resources. He challenged the supporters of the Whig Club: "[S]uppose the law of nations ever so clearly in your favour, I ask how are you to enforce it? Where is your fleet? Will you apply to Great Britain and desire her to go to war for you?" His awareness of the economic and military weakness of Ireland led him to a conservative position so far as Anglo-Irish relation be concerned.

Although O'Connor and Parsons had realised the future difficulties Ireland's poor capital stock would cause, they differed as to the policies to secure Irish interests. O'Connor, seeing aristocratic ascendancy as the real impediment to civilisation, had a scheme for the fundamental reformation of society, which would aggrandize merchants and manufacturers, namely the middle class. In his view, the existing political system, which had been preserved by the exclusion of Catholics and Dissenters from a political sphere, deprived them of their wealth and independence; it left cottagers in a slavish and wretched existence, and merchants and manufacturers in an exploited and insecure condition. As a result, the wealth produced by home-labour, which should have contributed to the benefit of the nation, had been absorbed by the Protestant aristocracy without any spirit of enterprise. Two years later, in his pseudonymous pamphlet The Measures of Ministry to Prevent a Revolution, are the Certain means of Bringing it on, he remarked that "by one mode of expenditure the fund for the employment of the industrious is squandered, by the other is saved and augmented", and that the "monopoly of landed property", on which the aristocracy was based, creating "a power and a disposition in the possessor to influence and to degrade those by whom it is inhabited", annihilated their "independent wills, on which alone a free government can be formed"; therefore, without abolishment of the monopoly, "all plans of reform are illusionary and insufficient". Unlike Parsons, O'Connor saw the British influence on Ireland solely as a support of the aristocratic ascendancy, as long as it was based on a monopolising and exclusionist constitution. His notion of "nation" is noticeable in the sense that it simply concerned itself with the economy in each region, ignoring any organic sense of cultural or historical unity. In his address to the people of County Cork, as High Sheriff, two months before his parliamentary speech on East India trade in 1792, he declared: "I respect the national credit as a commercial country too highly to sport with either, to answer the ends of 'private emolument', or 'party trick'." His speeches and pamphlet in the early 1790s convey his ideal of a commercial nation, in which the members of a society, engaged in their business and pursuing their own

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127 Ibid., p.106f.
129 The Hibernian Journal, 16 December, 1791.
interests, emulated each other on the principle of justice and equality, namely a
typical ideal of "civil" society. The same principle was adopted for international
relationships. After he went into exile, he wrote a pamphlet which was a
thorough-going accusation against the British empire. Its first chapter, which
criticised the policy which Great Britain had pursued as to other nations, begins
with a declaration of his principles of internationalism:
Nations like individuals may be said to bid fair for peace and tranquility, when, with
sufficient strength to make their independence respected, they employ their industry and their
means to provide for their wants and to add to their enjoyments, without injury or injustice
towards any other people; while nations, who erect political systems in opposition to the
INTERESTS and in violation of the RIGHTS of others, must be in a state of violence and war
with the rest of the world. 76

5.3 Anti-imperial War Policy and New Internationalism

Tone and O'Connor differed in their approach towards the political and
social issues of Ireland, at the outset of their commitment to politics: the
former's approach was that of civil jurisprudence, the latter's of political
economy. However, as early as 1791, both men realised the limitation of a
conventional reform movement and saw the need to alter the Protestant
constitution itself, in order to protect the national wealth from exploitation by
the domestic aristocratic ascendancy allied with Britain. Furthermore,
although O'Connor, as well as Tone, had an idea of a national militia, O'Connor's
ideal of the army was strongly influenced by the French Republican Army,
which he knew from experience in Lafayette's headquarters at Sedan, when he
visited France in August 1792. 76 He saw the Republican army as
fundamentally different from the Royal army:
an army composed of men, whose minds wholly unshackled by feudal, or other dependence,
and feeling all the freedom of commercial state, sought for a constitution in which the
aggrandizement of individuals was guarded against with sanguinary jealousy. 77
Unlike O'Connor, Tone found civic virtue in the militia, which, renouncing self-
interests, sought the public good, as mentioned in section 2 of this chapter. On
the other hand, O'Connor, foreseeing the emergence of self-interested and
independent men in the commercial state, planned to organise a "new model"
army, designed to resist the suppressive force to which both inner and outer
enemies - the aristocracy and the British empire - would resort. Before he went
to France, although he had theoretically realised what should be done to bring

77 According to Frank MacDermot's account which rests on Le Bignon Paper, when
O'Connor visited Lafayette for two weeks, he wore the uniform of the Irish
78 The Measures..., p.45.
the social condition of Ireland into the commercial state, his ideas were still far removed from practice. His experience of the French Revolution, in which he saw his theory of commercial society put into practice by the Girondins, enabled him to put his revolutionary ideas into shape. As a result of this, *The Measures*... was written during 1793. At this stage, he described what had been happening in Europe, and what should happen in the British empire, including Ireland:

It is not the French Revolution which has rendered property insecure. These has been a Revolution in civil society throughout all Europe, of which the French revolution is a part; which, when considered, will demonstrate, “that the monopolising and exclusionary system is no longer feasible”. 

Furthermore, he foresaw that reaction by the established ruling class would lead inevitably to a real battle with popular power in commercial society:

It is vain to persuade men, who have possessed themselves of the power and property of their country, that a revolution has happened in civil society in Europe, which must bring men to nearer equality, than they are in at present.... I know they will not be convinced that the progress of this revolution is as inevitable, as the existence of the circumstances which have occasioned it are indisputable, no ways to be diverted by the contingencies of battles, intrigues, negotiations, or factions. 

His awareness of European civil revolution led him to consider the popular movement in Ireland in a wider perspective. From an aspect of politicisation of the people, he realised the need for political and military mass-organisation.

O'Connor wrote the pamphlet with intent to oppose the reactionary policy of the Pitt Administration. The decree by the French National Convention on 19 November had increased Pitt's anxieties as to the dangers to be anticipated from British radical societies and had an important immediate effect in causing the British government to repudiate negotiations which had been unofficially initiated at the Hague for a general pacification. ... Precautionary measures to call out part of the militia and to increase Britain’s state of naval preparedness were taken on 1 December and parliament was recalled on the 13th. Then, this hard line had driven the French Convention to “declare war on Britain and the United Provinces” on 1 February 1793. 

The fact that the publisher of the pamphlet, Daniel Isaac Eaton, was one of the leading British radicals, shows that O'Connor had been involved with radical circles in England. Their anti-French war propaganda led him to explore the disadvantages for the nation of the imperial system, especially for the lower orders. The main target of his attack was increased taxation on the common people in the form of excise taxes to support swelling military expenditures. P.K. O’Brien’s recent study of wartime finance says that “military necessities also produced innovations to

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78 Ibid., p.27.
79 Ibid., p.51.
80 Albert Goodwin, Reform and Revolution in France: October 1789-February 1793, p.711.
the tax base and about 36 per cent of the extra revenue came from some 21
taxes not on the statute book in 1792”. As to this financial situation,
O’Connor said that “the monopoly of extreme wealth in the hands of a few” had
“occasioned an extreme poverty in the many”, and war followed that poverty.
Although British ministers presumed the war must be short, cheap and glorious,
he declared, “England must suffer the ‘last disasters’”.

Tone also made a case against war in his letter To the Manufacturers of
Dublin, in March 1793. He argued against the interference of Britain in the
domestic politics in France, and claimed that Ireland had no concern with the
execution of the King of France. He applied the same reasoning as he did in
Spanish War! to the case. The war would utterly ruin manufactures and
commerce, and they would find out that “it had been better to have let the
French alone to settle their own disputes among themselves ... I never could
learn what good came to the poor people by a battle or a victory”.~

The awareness of the link between imperial war and its costs for the
lower people led not only Tone and O’Connor but other liberals like the
radicalised Foxite Whigs to line up against Pitt’s imperial policy. Especially the
break in relationship between Burke and Fox had significant influence on the
political context of Ireland. Burke had long been connected with Catholic leaders
and the parliamentary opposition. For those who pursued “civil revolution” or
“French principles”, his influence added to their suspicion of Catholic activists.
After 1794, the situation of the war became more severe and the British
administration, faced with serious financial difficulty, intended to shift a part of
the war expenditure onto Ireland. Between the autumn of 1794 and winter of
the following year, the budget to finance pursuit of the war was the first item on
the political agenda. This situation enabled Pitt and the Portland Whigs to form
a coalition, in support of the policy of continuation of the war, to send a new Lord
Lieutenant, Fitzwilliam, a Portland Whig and patron of Burke, to Ireland. The
Irish Whigs in the parliamentary opposition like Grattan and Portland and the
Catholic activists expected him to accept their long-standing claims, and Whig
leaders moved to the government side at the outset of his administration.

The appointment of Fitzwilliam enabled the administration to get
effective support from public opinion. After the traditional patriotic opposition
moved to the government side, the war budget, with its heavy new excise taxes
on the nation, passed easily. Grattan, openly supporting the war, shared with
Catholics leaders the view that if Fitzwilliam granted Catholics their total
emancipation and recruited them to the Royal army, the war would give a good

81 P.K. O’Brien, “Public Finance in the Wars with France 1793-1815”, in H.T. Dickinson
82 The Measures..., p.52ff..

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opportunity to prove the independence and virtue of the Irish nation. In the Catholic meeting on 9 April 1795, to protest about the government’s rejection of Catholic emancipation and the dismissal of the Lord Lieutenant, the majority of the participants, expressing the same patriotic sentiments as Grattan’s, enthusiastically supported the war. Although they were aware of a probable dangerous political conspiracy to promote a legislative union of both kingdoms in return for Catholic emancipation, ultimately they preferred to rely on the British empire.

The radicals in the United Irishmen, linking the Anglo-French war with the continental situation, had seen the war as a clash between republican liberation power and old monarchical power. Therefore, they saw in the arrival of Fitzwilliam as Lord Lieutenant a result of the reactionary coalition to protect the monarchical constitution, and did not welcome it. As to the rumor about the accomplishment of total Catholic emancipation and Grattan and other opposition leaders taking office in the new administration, an editorial of the *Northern Star* conveys some reservations on the real intention of Westminster and Dublin Castle. The coverage of the newspaper at that time shows that the radicals were attempting to join a main stream of the global liberation movement of nations: trials of English and Irish radicals, the present state of continental war, especially the Polish revolution and its leader, Kosciusko, the debate between Foxite Whig and Pitt are features.

In addition to radicals, there was an exceptional anti-war voice among imperialistic constitutionalists. In the Commons, in the face of the great majority, Henry Duquery, opposing Fitzwilliam and Grattan, made a case against the war and the war budget on 22 January 1795. Regarding the war as unjust in principle, he remarked: "Mr. Pitt has repeated in the British House of Common, and the British House of Lords go further and say, not only that France must change her government, but that she must reassume her ancient monarchy". Confirming the inseparable union between two countries, he moved that the parliament implore the King to conclude a peace with France, regardless of the form of French government. Ponsonby, a leading Irish Whig, opposing Duquery, said that the first and leading principle of the federal union between both countries was the union of forces, without which the union could not subsist. When England’s existence itself was at stake, he went on to say, the first exertion of independence by Ireland should not end in desertion of England. This statement reveals the attitude of Irish Whigs towards the British empire, on which they had grounded their privilege and interests.

*P.R., XV(1795), p.100.*

*N.S., 16 -20 Oct. 1794.*

*P.R., XV(1795), p.11-15.*
Furthermore, Robert Jephson, seeing the initial purpose of the war as protection of imperial interests from the French "republican" empire, said that since "France very well knew that the East and West Indies were the right and left arm of Great Britain", it might make its first attack on these colonies before one on the mother country. Assuming it to be true, he remarked, "the minister was right in directing the exertions of the empire as he had done". On 9 February, Duquery again attacked the war policy in terms of taxation. Even if it were true that commerce came to life and the revenue increased as the Chancellor of the Exchequer mentioned, he argued, that excise taxes like the leather tax should be checked, because they diminished the incomes of the poorer. As an alternative step, he proposed to levy direct taxes on all pensions, salaries, fees, perquisites, and so on, stressing the advantage that the government could get immediate supply, "not from the indigent and wretched, but from the purses of the proud and wealthy". However, his view was totally neglected. These parliamentary arguments shows how efficiently the liberalist facade of the Fitzwilliam administration seduced the opposition.

For the formation of liberal radicalism from liberal imperialism, the turning point came when the British empire became bogged down in the war. At that point, totally disappointed at the existing opposition power, they realised their fundamental difference from supporters of the traditional imperial system. In the eyes of radicals, the imperial system appeared not to promote civilisation any more, but rather to preserve the old regime. It is not surprising that O'Connor made his unexpected speech on the Catholic bill on 4 May, soon after the critical moment between winter and early spring. At that moment, the Irish Whigs had revealed their nature as aristocratic patriots, and the radical core, which owed much to Tone, had been formed within the United Irish organisation. In the following chapter, the question as to the radicalisation of liberal doctrine in the Catholic emancipation campaign shall be considered, and it will show how Tone tried to unite the different understandings of "rights" between Catholics and liberal Presbyterians in the campaign in the early 1790s.

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87 P.R., XV(1795), p.79-82.
88 P.R., XV(1795), p.105.
Chapter 6:
THE CREATION OF A COMMON IDEOLOGY: THE RESTORATION OF ANCIENT RIGHTS

A Constitution formed so as to enable a party to overrule its very Government, and to overpower the people too, answers the purposes neither of Government nor of freedom. It compels that power, which ought, and often would be, disposed equally to protect the Subjects, to fail in its trust, to counteract its purposes, and to become no better than the instrument of the wrongs of a faction.

Edmund Burke ¹

If there were no other object proposed but this single one [i.e. vulnerability of England in its navy], I affirm with confidence, it is of magnitude by itself, sufficient to decide the French Government to make every effort to obtain it; which can only be effected through the medium of a national Government to be established in Ireland.

Theobald Wolfe Tone ²

6.0 Tone's Radical Formula

Tone broke away from the main stream of the conventional reform movement in the early 1790s, influenced by world-wide popular thinking. Differing with other reformers in his approach to Catholic emancipation, he now saw the question not as one of religious toleration, but of political freedom and democracy, and considered that real emancipation of the whole nation had to entail undermining of the actual constitution itself. In other words, Protestants themselves, subjugated by the British empire, could not be perfectly liberated unless Catholics were. This awareness of a two-tier structure of domination, which led Tone to conceive an idea of breakaway from the empire as mentioned in the previous chapter, also enabled him to build up radical arguments for Catholic emancipation.

First of all, Tone’s position on the Catholic question before he was involved with the Catholic General Committee, must be clarified. By the 1778 Catholic Relief Act, Catholics were given “the freedom to purchase estates on equal terms with Protestants and to bequeath land without having to gavel it (i.e. divide the land among all the sons)”. ³ Then, one of the two Catholic Relief Acts of 1782 permitted Catholics to “hold land on the same terms as Protestants, ‘advowsons, and manors and boroughs returning members to Parliament excepted’”, freed “registered priests from most of the penalties decreed against Catholic ecclesiastics”. Moreover, “Catholics who had taken the

oath of allegiance" were permitted "to open school" by the other act. 4 Despite their gradual relief in the economic sphere, Catholics in the 1790s were still excluded from the public sphere. In this sense, the political situation of Protestant dissenters (mainly Presbyterians) was rather similar to Catholics'. The former had been "excluded from Crown office and local government by the 'Test clause' inserted in the 1704 Popery Act". 5 Although repeal of the sacramental test for Presbyterians in 1780 legally made it possible for them to take their place on borough corporations, control of the boroughs by landed proprietors (Belfast for instance was a "pocket borough" of Lord Donegall's) still effectively excluded them from holding borough seats in parliament. 6 Moreover, both sects were subject to the tithes system. However, as mentioned in Chapter 4, there was a ideological gap between Catholics and Presbyterians in their claim of political rights. While Presbyterian arguments against tithes rested on the unfairness in imposing tithe without consent, Catholics stressed their loyalty to the actual constitution, mindful of the prospect as Royal subjects of further relief. Without an awareness of the serious gap, Tone approached the Catholic question. A passage in his autobiography to the effect that "Russell wrote me an account of all this [i.e. the Catholic question], and it immediately set me on thinking more seriously than I had yet done upon the state of Ireland", has led historians to underestimate his own views on the question in 1791. 7 However, the analysis in this chapter of his views in terms of the radicalisation of his liberal doctrine shows that, when Tone realised the fundamental difference between religious toleration and political freedom in the spring of the year, his understanding of the Catholic question became more radical than Russell's. 8

Then, what was his achievement in the exploration of the Catholic question in the middle of 1791? It was his discovery that a real source of the discrimination against Catholics was not simply bigotry, but contention between two incompatible views of justice between Catholics and Protestants in the two seventeenth century revolutions in England and the consequent political and economic injustice. Moreover, immediately after Tone became familiar with the Catholic leaders of the enfranchisement campaign, he discovered the fundamental theoretical difference between Catholics' argument for enfranchisement and that of liberal Presbyterians: the former claimed it as a

7 Elliott, Wolfe Tone, p.103; MacDermot, Theobald Wolfe Tone..., p.71.
8 For a discussion of the difference between Tone's view about Christianity and that of Russell, see, Chapter 5, p.110f..
right of Royal subjects; the latter as a natural right of man. Faced with these difficulties, although Tone accepted the Paineite principle of religious freedom as one of the inalienable rights of man, he came to realise that the wrongs done by government in the past should be redressed in accordance with the liberal principles of the British “free” constitution, without waiting on the growing democratic movement in Ireland to usher in a new government. Hence, he sought a remedy for the rift among sects and found it in the idea of the restoration of the ancient rights of free born Irishmen. Although the idea itself had been used by the advocates of reform in England since the 1780s and also by the Catholic advocates of enfranchisement in Ireland, Tone adopted it afresh in the Irish context for retrospective redress. Such is an outline of the argument in this chapter. It shall illustrate how Tone’s civil-jurisprudential perspective became radical in parallel with his involvement as a mediator in the Catholic emancipation campaign.

6.1 An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland: Spring and Summer in 1791

When Tone took account of the Catholic question, his initial concern was to politicise people, most of whom were Catholics. In his view, unless they became a politicised “nation”, there was no possibility of organising a real national movement seeking for the exclusion of the unconstitutional influence of the British empire. For this purpose, as Digges’s information about liberation movements by the native Americans in South America suggested, leaders of Catholics “should be the first objects to get at”, because “through them it may be easily communicated to the people”. Moreover, in an essay written in the winter of 1790-91, he argued the necessity of domestic union on the ground of securing national interests against British influence. However, in the essay, he had not got down to the roots of domestic division, that is to say, the incompatibility of interests among Protestants, Presbyterians and Catholics, which stemmed from colonisation, plunder, and forfeiture in the past. Seeing the whole nation as enslaved, Tone ignored Protestants’ tendency to secure their sectional interests and their properties. At first, in the spring of 1791, his awareness of the need of political participation of Catholics in the parliamentary reform led him to call for their natural rights. Faced with the Protestant and Presbyterian opposition, he soon realised that the Catholic question was less that of Catholics than of the other sects.

This political situation was closely related to a diversity of understanding

Tone, Life I, p.539; this point has been discussed in the previous chapter. See, section 5.1.
of Paine's *The Rights of Man*, which had circulated throughout the country since it came out. Historians have emphasised from the extent of its circulation its wide influence on the public of Ireland. However, the question as to how it was understood by the audience remains untouched. Since it is the main subject here to define Tone's position, it is sufficient to point out the difference between Tone and Drennan as to natural rights. Paine, uniformly basing natural rights on the existence of each individual in society, classified them into two categories: one, individual rights which every one retains by way of power to act individually; the other, civil rights, which, although based in the natural rights of individuals, need to be exercised by a common power in a society. 

Regarding religion as one of the individual natural rights, he dismissed the notion of tolerance itself as "despotism", no less than intolerance, because the latter "assumes to itself the right of withholding Liberty of Conscience", and the former "of granting". He suggested a practical principle of execution of religious judgment:

> With respect to what are called denominations of religion, if everyone is let to judge of his own religion, there is no such things as a religion that is wrong: but if they are to judge of each other's religion, there is no such thing as a religion that is right.

Furthermore, criticising Burke's argument for an inseparable connection between church and state, he said: "By engendering the church with the state, a sort of mule-animal, capable only of destroying, and not breeding up, is produced, called *The Church established by Law*." According to this secularist principle, Catholic emancipation should be regarded not as a matter of toleration but of natural rights: Catholics should be granted civil rights as part of their natural rights, not as rights of the Royal subjects tolerated by government.

Tone realised that the only reform deserving of the name was one which aimed to liberate Catholics, who, driven into the worst situation politically, economically and socially by the very Protestant constitution, were neither enlightened nor politicised enough to be a political nation. This radical view is reflected in his memorandum of 14 July 1791, which says that "no reform could be just or efficacious, which did not include the Catholics". This statement implied not simply the needs of the Catholic majority in terms of number, but that, unless Catholics were emancipated, the whole nation also would remain under the restrictions of the old regime. Moreover, in the preface of *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics*, expressing his total agreement with Paine's theory on natural rights, he declared that he argued "little on the abstract right of the people to reform their Legislature; for, after Paine, who will, or who need,
be heard on that subject?" At this stage, Tone based Catholic emancipation purely on Paineite natural rights. He had not have any close connection with the Catholic committee, in which a considerable numbers of middle class Dubliners were elected as representatives in the previous year, and which launched itself into a campaign for repeal of the penal laws in the spring. His preoccupation with the Catholic question grew, less out of his personal sympathy with them, than out of his political strategy.

On the other hand, Drennan was stimulated by Paine’s pamphlet in a different way. Favouring the title “rights of man”, he repeatedly used it as a slogan, but failed to grasp the essence of Paine’s revolutionary theory. His view basically followed Price and Priestley, whose influence was reflected in a passage of his letter, which spoke of “a benevolent conspiracy... the Rights of Men and the Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number its end”. Furthermore, much of his outlook came from Masonry, more widespread in Ireland than in France, and from its worship of brotherhood bound up with a deistic intuition of the supreme being. He said that he desired to established a society, with “so much secrecy as might communicate curiosity, uncertainty, expectation to the minds of surrounding men, so much impressive and affecting ceremony”, because the secrecy gave “greater energy within, great influence abroad”. Two present-day historians, A.T.Q. Stewart, who gave his article the title “a stable unseen power” after a phrase in Drennan’s letter, and Elliott, who observed that his “ideas are far more militant than anything Tone was writing at the time”, consider Drennan’s political thought more radical than Tone at that stage. However, Drennan’s statement in the letter cannot be seen as resting on a long-term radical policy and strategy. Rather, it is only a curiosity of organising a secret salvation army. If “a secret organisation” or “conspiracy” of themselves were to be treated as evidence of radicalism, we would have to see the Mafia and other gangs as radical. Not the external forms of organisation but the specific policy and social views are the decisive element of radicalness. If we consider Drennan’s comment in these terms, there is no necessary relation between the revolutionary slogans in which he indulged himself, and an idea of a secret society. It is not surprising that Tone “threw overboard the mumbo-jumbo of mystery and ceremonial for which Drennan had argued”. Besides, Tone had drawn his political platform for the liberation of the nation from Paine’s theory, while Drennan was still confined to a notion of toleration. The idea of a secret

15 MacDermot, Theobald Wolfe Tone..., p.71; I wonder on what ground MacDermot saw Tone as “so far actually less radical than Drennan”.
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society, in which qualified members, embracing a sort of general religion of tolerant brotherhood, enjoyed intimate friendships with each other, shows that he took no account of the real need for the politicisation of Catholics or of the lower class and of the difficulties of doing so. In Drennan's view, Catholics could be granted their civil rights not on the basis of their existence itself, but of their being "Irish citizens", by which he meant recognised members of civil society, implicitly supposing a only small number of Catholics deserved the status. Unlike Tone, who saw the politicisation and emancipation of Catholics as the liberation not only of themselves but of the whole nation, Drennan's attitude towards Catholics was on the principle that Presbyterians, whom he saw as a centre of enlightened liberal politics, should hold hegemony over them and observe - and judge - how their improvement towards the political maturity of Presbyterians progressed.

Drennan's reservation about Catholics also stemmed from their connection with Edmund Burke, who had attacked the principles of the French Revolution. Drennan, seeing the Catholics as aided by a political reactionary and irritated at their political naiveté, often expressed hostility to them. After he met John Keogh, a leader of the new Catholic Committee, and Richard Burke on 4 January 1791, supposing that the purpose of their visit was "to spy out the land", he wrote: "if nothing happens soon, ... the Catholics will fall off, ... indeed Burke and Keogh coming over looks like it". When Keogh frankly told Drennan that a high official in England suggested some possibility of relaxation of the Penal laws with the proviso that Catholics should break off with the Presbyterians, Drennan concluded that "they would do so either before or after". 16

This reservation, shared by many of the liberal Presbyterian reformers in Belfast, caused Drennan anxiety that, if Catholics allied themselves with the Protestant parliamentary opposition and with Burke (who separated from the Whig party in May 1791 on account of his differences with Fox over the latter's French principles), the liberal power of Presbyterians would be isolated. When a meeting of Volunteer Corps to celebrate the fall of the Bastille on 14 July was planned in Belfast, Drennan, saw it as a good opportunity to associate Catholic emancipation activists with Presbyterian reformers, for the purpose of showing the Northern Presbyterians "liberal enough not to deny the common rights of men to Catholics", and to draw up "some articles as a base ... of amity and alliance between the two bodies in a common cause" in order to shock the Government. 17 Taking account of the participation of Catholic leaders, he explained his detailed plan of the meeting, in his letter to Samuel McTier: "Keogh

16 The Drennan Letters, p.52f..
17 Ibid., p.56f.
and some other of the Catholics will probably be with you. I think one of your orators should first read the Declaration of Rights, another the Address, the Declaration by a third. I like the Jacobin motto best." In this way, he attempted to have the liberal Presbyterians hold hegemony over the Catholic leaders. His stress on the "common rights of men", therefore, should be understood primarily as his bait for the Catholics. He never managed to rid himself of a sense of a power struggle among the three sects.

One of his letters shows what his actual estimation of the Catholics was. Pointing to a traditional aristocratic tendency in Catholic society, he presumed that even the new Catholic committee, which resumed campaigning for the repeal of the Penal Laws, would "act aristocratically" and be "under the eye and influence of Government", because the members of the committee were only "nominated by the towns", and the land-holders sat "in their own rights". What he saw as the limited representation of the middle-class, he thought, would tempt them to prefer a "chance of getting a little", to running "the risk of coalescing with" the Presbyterians "who they think treated them ill". At the same time, his letter shows the extent of the civil rights which in his view would make the committee happy: the right of membership of the Bar, of being justices of the peace and magistrates, of carrying arms, and the franchise. As to the last, adverting to differences among the committee members themselves about the franchise, the majority would be happy to extend it "only to those who have £50 per annum". In this way, while he took the "rights of men" for a slogan, his actual attitude towards the rights of Catholics was not based on an acceptance of their rights.

Furthermore, he failed to foresee the sharp divide over Catholic emancipation among the Northern Whig party and the Belfast Volunteers. Drennan was asked to prepare resolutions for the meeting, but he declined because of a shortage of time. Since he had contact with Tone in the drawing up of resolutions for the establishment of a society, which was to become the Belfast Society of United Irishmen, he suggested that Tone would probably be able "to mould his resolutions into" the shape of an address. Tone "received the request for resolutions on the 7th" and sent down his resolutions to Belfast by the 9th. His account on the business, that the resolutions were "suited to this day [i.e. a meeting on 14th] and reduced to three heads"), suggests that he modified his original version to the form Drennan had in mind. Tone, unconcerned about the actual situation of the Northern Presbyterians, had lost

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18 Ibid., p.60.
19 Ibid., p.57.
20 Ibid., p.60.
21 Elliott, Wolfe Tone, p.125.
22 Tone, Life I, p.140; Life II, p.51.
no time in drawing up the new resolutions. As a result, he was faced with the unforeseen rejection of his resolutions at the meeting. According to his memorandum on 14 July, the third resolution in his original form said that “no reform could be just or efficacious, which did not include the Catholics”. However, he deliberately toned it down “in concession to prejudices”:

[The true greatness and happiness of Ireland can arise solely from a complete internal Union of all her [i.e. Irish] People ... the Abolition of Distinction between Irishmen equally invidious and unjust, and which have been uniformly the Source of Weakness and Misery and Disgrace to the Country.]

In spite of their moderate tone, the third heading was dismissed by the Northern Whigs and the Belfast Volunteers. Informed about this result on 17 July, he wrote in great anger that “the party”, although they were “apparently, and perhaps really most anxious for reform”, had as their object “rather a monopoly, than an extension of liberty, ... contrary to all justice and expediency”. It is not surprising that Tone felt betrayed by the Northern Whigs, because he assumed that they took the same view about Catholic emancipation as the Whigs of the Capital did, who had for the purpose of diffusing it widely issued a cheap edition of Paine’s *The Rights of Man*. According to David Dickson’s research, however, the reception of Paine’s influence in the Bastille day celebrations differed in Belfast and in Dublin. The participants in Dublin admired him much more enthusiastically than those in Belfast. Since Tone was familiar only with the fervent support for the rights of men in the Dublin celebration, when he was told of the refusal of the Northern Whigs to champion the cause of rights of Catholic, his resentment against their superficiality inevitably became greater.

This unexpected result made Tone realise how superficially the reformers had admired *The Rights of Man*. At that time, he had been writing his pamphlet on the Catholic question, and had almost finished the draft. However, the event led him to add some paragraphs to it. In a paragraph, which directly reflects his indignation with the Northern Whigs, he added:

We [i.e. Protestants] prate and babble, and write books, and publish them, filled with sentiments of freedom, and abhorrence of tyranny, and lofty praises of *the Rights of Man*! Yet we are content to hold three millions of our fellow creatures and fellow subjects, in degradation and infamy and contempt, or to sum up all in one word, in slavery! “On what chapter of the *Rights of Man*”, he ironically asked the Whigs, do you base your “title to liberty”, while you “are rivetting the fetters of the wretched Roman Catholics”. The statement in his memorandum at that moment: “my present impression is, to become a red hot Catholic”, conveys his indignation, which led him to make an appeal to Protestants on behalf of Catholics in the

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23 P.R.O. H.O. 100/33/91-92; Elliott, ibid, p.125.
last part of the pamphlet. It is interesting that Tone relied on the same liberal principles of the rights of the conquered as Locke posed in *The Second Treatise of Government*. Locke said:

[L]et us suppose that all the Men of that Community being all Members of the same Body Politick, may be taken to have joyn'd in that unjust war, wherein they are subdued, and so their Lives are at the Mercy of the Conquerour. ... I say, this concerns not their Children, who are in their Minority. 26

Tone argued that the existing generation of Catholics, although they themselves did not commit any offences, had been unjustly penalised, and that even if their ancestors offended, the present generation of Catholics should not lose their present property and power as a penalty for past offence: therefore Protestants had no legitimate ground for withholding civil liberty from them. Ironically saying that while “the nations of Europe” were “vindicating themselves into freedom”, Protestants in Ireland, talking about it themselves, intended to leave Catholics behind, he attacked the Northern Whig’s obscurantist attitude towards the rights of Catholics. 27 His very pseudonym “a Northern Whig” suggests, far from common ground, his protest against the conduct of the party.

Tone’s emphasis on natural rights also stemmed from his strategy for the liberation of Ireland. He himself said in his memoir that “I soon formed my theory, and on that theory I have unvaryingly acted ever since”. 28 He had already revealed as mentioned in the previous chapter that parliamentary corruption had served as a device for the unconstitutional influence of Britain. Here, his further consideration on unchecked corruption enabled him to search out its real root, which was the overwhelmingly defective representation in the Irish parliament. He observed: “In England we find a reform in Parliament is always popular, though it is but as a barrier against possible, not actual grievance”. He conceived that the unequal distribution of the elective franchise in England would not bring actual disadvantage to the English nation, because at least the Government could be expected to follow the real interests of the nation. On the other hand, he thought that the reform of the parliamentary representation in Ireland was not a “speculative remedy for possible evils” but an indispensable step, because in the actual state of parliamentary representation, in which, of “four millions of people, three” were “actually and confessedly unrepresented”, the people of Ireland had no effective power to check the Government, which gave precedence to the interests of England. 29 The conduct of the Northern Whigs gave him a opportunity to realise that most

26 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, p.393.
reformists were concerned only with purification of corruption by way of places, pensions, and rotten boroughs. As long as the alliance between the Protestant reform movement and the Catholic emancipation campaign remained external or superficial—"to shock the Government" as Drennan planned—both of them, in Tone's opinion, would fail, because the imperial administration knew well how to drive popular power to self-destruction: to divide the people and make them clash with each other. Therefore, it was crucial for the success of his scheme to lead both parties beyond shortsighted adherence to the fragmented interests of their own sects to awareness of their common interests. If so, he further considered, what was the common interest, which had to cement them solidly enough to resist government pressure to break up the alliance? The interest Tone discovered was the interest of a nation long despoiled and exploited under the unconstitutional influence of the British empire. Infusing into Catholics and Protestants a sense of national interest in place of a sectarian one, he planned to lead them to protect their nation against Britain, by common cause with each other. In cases where the imperial and Irish domestic interests differed, as the issues set out in Spanish War! suggested to him, Parliament would support the former even if public opinion favoured the latter. From this observation, he concluded that the nation would not be able to reject British influence in Parliament unless people could pressure MPs to follow the interest of their native land, and the enfranchisement of Catholics at large was indispensable for this purpose:

To oppose the unconstitutional weight of Government, subject as that Government is to the still more unconstitutional and unjust bias of English influence, it is absolutely necessary that the weight of the people's scale should be increased. This object can only be attained by a reform in Parliament, and no reform is practicable, that shall by not include the Catholics. These three steps are inseparably connected, and let not any man deceive himself, by supposing the first attainable without the second, or either without the third. 30

Tone put into shape his rough idea of liberation of the Irish nation, which he had conceived since he had received information on the popular movement in South America from Digges. Furthermore, civil revolutions on the Continent, especially the Polish one, gave him a suggestive example of national independence. In August 1791, he mentioned Poland, as well as America and France in the epilogue of An Argument... . In May of that year, Poland, long suffering from aristocratic discord under the influence of Prussia and the Russian empire, established a new constitutional monarchy, which declared internal unity and external independence. Considering division and discord among a nation as a fatal weakness, which other imperialist states would easily take advantage of for their domination, Tone drew a guideline from the

30 Ibid., p. 364.
Polish example for liberation and independence of a nation. He understood the status quo in revolutionary Europe in terms of the struggle between old empires and subjected nations. Therefore, he commented in 1796 that “my object was to secure the independence of my country under any form of government”, and that “I left to others, better qualified for the inquiry, the investigation and merits of the different forms of government”.

This comment points to a distinctive difference in Tone’s perspective compared with Drennan’s and Tandy’s. Tone’s definition of “republic” was a Paineite one, which means not “any particular form of government”, but a political ideal of government for the people. In this sense, Tone wrote about “the impossibility of attaining a Republic by any means short of the united power of the whole people”. On the other hand, Drennan’s notion of republic was simply the antonym of monarchy. His view was similar to that of Napper Tandy, a veteran of Volunteer politics and a man with considerable influence in Dublin Corporation politics, as a long-standing advocate of reform. After the French Revolution took place, Tandy became a enthusiastic supporter of French republicanism, and organised the Bastille day review in Dublin, as a member of the Whigs of the Capital and a city Volunteer corp. Although Drennan, describing Tandy “in all the surliness of republicanism”, expressed ill-feeling towards him the year before, he also became a pedantic advocate of French Republicanism. His plan of a new political society in May 1791 said the “its particular purpose” was “Republicanism”. In a letter of that time, quoting from Paine, he made a ironical comment on Poland, which presents a striking contrast to Tone’s view. It said: “For Poland - A King, the First and Best of Citizens - the Artificial Noble shrinks before the Noble of Nature (Paine); For America - Man, man for high and only title (Paine)”. His romantic yearning towards republicanism led him to criticise the reunited Poland for remaining a monarchy. He took no notice of the importance of a national union to resist the subjugating powers of old empires in international relations. At that time, Tandy was a simple patriotic republican only in the sense of being anti-monarchist and anti-English. According to Tone’s memoir, Tone persuaded Tandy that the creation of the united power of the people should precede a change from the monarchical form of government to another form. At this stage, Tone understood that Tandy realised the distinction between national independence and the establishment of republican government and agreed with him. In early 1795, however, Tandy sent to the French Government a letter to

33 *The Drennan Letters*, [5 July 1791], p.54.
34 Ibid., p.60.
the effect that he volunteered for military service in the French troops sent to England.  

The letter conveys his Franco- and republican-philia, as the simple reverse of his Anglo- phobia and opposition to monarchy, which was to give rise to a rift between the two men in 1796. 

Tone's sentiment on republicanism in the memoir that "the establishment of a Republic was not the immediate object" has been misunderstood by historians as evidence establishing that he was not a decisive republican.  

By the statement, however, he actually meant that the question as to the form of Government, monarchy or republic, was not the chief consideration in terms of domestic politics and of foreign affairs. Liberal radicals including Tone aimed to replace domestic aristocratic monopoly in the legislature with a popular representative system, and tried to restore a sovereignty virtually lost by the merging of Crown of Ireland in that of Britain. Hence, for them, republicanism in the sense of anti-monarchy was not the first item on the agenda. We shall return to this point in the discussion about the ideological difference between Tone and the French Directory in Chapter 9.

Actually, the term "republican" has misled not only the contemporaries of Tone, but historians. From the outset, the meaning of "republicanism" was ideologically distorted by the so-called anti-jacobin propaganda in England, which, after the outbreak of the war with France, called even the advocates of parliamentary reform pro-French republicans. In this context, republicanism, considerably distorted, came to imply anti-English monarchy. By the same token, on the Irish side, the term "republican", which had suggested simply patriotic and idealistic classical-republican sentiment like Drennan's and Tandy's, came to imply the sympathisers of revolutionary France and the United Irishmen. Even Thomas Addis Emmet used the term in this popularised sense. Therefore, the terms "republican" and "republicanism" in the discourse of the contemporaries cannot be understood as distinctive features of liberal radicals; rather, the frequent use of those terms might be seen as a symptom of "French disease".

Tone's formula for the total liberation of the colonised nation in An Argument... merits a high regard, even when compared with that of other foreign, especially European political activists. From the standpoint of the present day, after the experience of the full tide of the nineteenth-century global liberation campaign of colonised nations, we might see in it no more than a typical formula without any novelty. However, who else was able to grasp the

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35 Archives Administratives de la Guerre, Dossiers Personnels, deuxième série, GB755 James Napper Tandy. The document is dated 2 Floreal au 4.
36 On this point, see, Chapter 9.
37 For instance, Elliott, Wolfe Tone, p.126.
38 On this point, see, chap. 10 (p.254).
essence of the issue of colonialism embraced in imperialism - multiplex subjugation and exploitation -, and who was able to built up a formula for breaking through it, more than fifty years before democratic socialists noticed the issues and theorised about them?

Marianne Elliott, on the other hand, declares:

Like all Tone's writings, the Argument says nothing new and owed much to ideas then in general circulation. But it speaks to the moment in plain, practical terms, and reproduces those ideas in immediately recognisable form. 39 The real meaning of his appeal to Protestants is misread in her understanding that he presented "Protestant readers with a stark and urgent decision ... accept the Catholics as allies and emancipation as part of the overall reform program, or abandon reform altogether". Tone actually suggested to all Protestants that the only alternatives were perfect liberation from the structure of subjection in unison with the Catholics, or perpetual subjection; there was no middle course. Furthermore, criticising him for his "middle class" standpoint, she says that "he spoke for his own class, the urban middle class, Catholic and Protestant alike", and that his "total lack of understanding of the Catholic peasantry was to cause problems for later generations of Catholic nationalists". Exclusively class-conscious comment seems irrelevant to the present case. To make a case for internal democracy and external independence is a political matter; to understand the actual state of the lower class is an economic one. When she declares: "Tone was no democrat and it is unrealistic to expect him to have been so", it is her notion of democracy itself which should be re-examined.

Besides, Elliott overlooks the characteristic of the pamphlet, which was designed to persuade Protestants as a whole to form a national consensus, written candidly from the standpoint of his actual position as a Protestant Irishman. Although she points out the plain mode of his speaking, she understands it only as a clever ploy to get a large supportive audience. However, the "conversational tone" of the pamphlet can be seen as a deliberate democratic style influenced by that of Paine in The Rights of Man. As to Paine's dialectical style, Olivia Smith comments that "Paine's narrative stance manages both to define himself clearly and to pay an unusual amount of attention to his readers", and that he defines "himself not by direct portrayal, but by leaving readers to recognise the contrast" between both views; the style itself reflects the principle that "everyone's thought is adequate for political participation". 40 Furthermore, she points out that language was one of the chief concerns of radicals in those days, because:

39 Elliott, Wolfe Tone, p.128f.
When suffrage was challenged in the 1790s, ideas about language were applied by courts of law and members of Parliament to justify repressive measures. Radicals had the difficult task of not only justifying the capabilities of the disenfranchised, but also of reedifying the nature of language.  

In contrast to Paine, Tone’s adoption of the dialectical style was for the purpose of breaking through sectarian rather than class consciousness. In the pamphlet, while Tone presented the assumptions of Protestants, which brought about “an immediate bond of identity with its author’s intended audience” as Elliott says, in turn he made comments on the same topic from the standpoint of Catholics. For example, it was the Protestants who expelled King James II from his throne, who should be seen “as rebels to their lawful prince”.  

In this way, he tried to show the readers that each justification of historical conduct had its own grounds and judgments, and that the debate on the historical justice and legitimacy of each sect was fruitless, because it inevitably ended in denial of the other’s rights. He observed: “The people are divided; each party afraid and jealous of the other; they have only the justice of their cause to support them”.  

Therefore, dialectically setting out the antagonistic views on each side about various subjects, he tried to lead the readers to more general and fresh views on the principle of “expediency”. The significance of this principle should not be overlooked. Expediency is a philosophical term derived from Hume’s philosophy, signifying a form of acceptance, as mentioned repeatedly in the previous chapters. The principle means acceptance and consent not in terms of legitimacy derived from the course of past events, but of greatness of expected interests and convenience in future. It enables people to define their consensus, without touching on the thorny matters of historical legitimacy and justice. In this way, Tone’s theoretical effort as a mediator is set out in An Argument...  

The pamphlet also discussed the influence of the Catholic question on national independence. The connection between the Catholic Committee and Burke put Tone under the apprehension that if Catholic emancipation, in spite of the opposition of Protestant MPs in the Irish parliament, was granted by the administration under the unconstitutional influence of the British government, Irish politics would totally lose its independence in practice, and that the British government, with the overwhelming support and approval of the Catholics, would secure perpetual unconstitutional predominance over the Irish nation: They [government] know that the Catholics hold the balance between them and the faction of the nation, which we choose to dignify with the name of the People; and, therefore, they court the Catholics. If they secure them, I should be glad to know what they have to fear...
with the whole Catholic party, three-fourths of the kingdom, attached by gratitude to them, and alienated by repeated suspicion, and unremitting ill usage from their enemies. 6

Just as Drennan tried to attract Catholic leaders to the liberal reform movement, Tone also, though with a more penetrating perception, realised the need to keep them separate from the British patron. From the outset, having conceived his own scheme to break up the connection, he approached the Catholic Committee, especially its leader, John Keogh. Occasional detached observations in his journals convey his reservation about Keogh's real intention. However, Drennan, taking no notice of Tone's intention, identified Tone with the Catholic leaders. Consequently, in Drennan's portrayal in his letters, Tone appears not as a mediator, but as a tool of the Catholics.

All these novelties in the latter part of An Argument ... should be attributed to Tone himself. Russell's influence on him has been overestimated on the ground of the affinities between the pamphlet and Russell's journals on the Catholic question, and Tone's isolated but more quoted comment mentioned above. In terms of the Protestants' objections against the Catholics, Russell certainly offered some suggestions to Tone, because Tone's pamphlet embraces the same topics as Russell's. However, both men fundamentally differed in the solutions to the Catholic question they presented in 1791.

First of all, Russell argued for Catholic emancipation on the principle that a state should not “interfere with a religious belief of any one” if the belief “does not affect the government or morals of the country”. It is “absurd, unjust and cruel”, he went on, that a state “lay any of its subjects under repressive restraint[s]” in the religious matter, although their tenets “do not interfere with the government or morals of people”. The proviso in this quotation shows that his religious perspective in the summer of 1791 still deviated from the principle of secularism in modern enlightenment. As I already discussed, Russell’s view of Christianity in his writing of February 1791, the ground for his justification of religion, is not individual liberty from Government but the good or benign effect of religion on society. 8 Moreover, remarking that legal restrictions on the property of Catholics resulted from the experience of “the political evils incident to that belief”, he commented that “those evils were perhaps temporary”. In contrast with Tone’s civil-jurisprudential argument, Russell’s perspective was close to Burke’s which justified regimes and political rights of individuals on the ground of their expediency in a certain contextualised social situation. This accounts for his disagreement with the natural rights which Paine maintained and for his argument for Catholic emancipation on the ground of expediency. Declaring that if the Catholics wished “to participate [in] the benefits of the

6 Ibid., p.364f.
8 On this point, see, Chapter 5, p.111.
constitution they should give some security that they will not endeavour to subvert it", he recommended them to resolve in a meeting to show their own loyalty to "the zealots of intolerance", following the example of the Catholics in England.

Finally, as to the problem of forfeited land, Russell commented that it would not matter so seriously, because the descendants of those who lost their land in forfeitures either were extinct, or "narrowness of their fortunes and educations would effectually prevent their restoration". About the same subject, Tone, recognising that the forfeitures held by Protestants had been executed by force with one-sided justice, proposed a guideline for the reconciliation between both sects, which said that "liberation of the Catholics will be a work of compact ... subject to stipulations", and that, in this compact, both should "coincide somewhat". By this suggestion, he meant compensation for the unjust forfeitures and an allowance on the Protestant side for the consequent disadvantage. Using the words "forfeitures" and "power obtained in injustice", by which he alluded to the wrong which the Protestant government had done to Catholics, he proposed creating national consensus in a legal mode to iron out the existing partiality in political and economic power. From these remarks it is clear that Russell did not make a theoretical contribution to Tone's political works. It was more a case of the personality of Russell, a man of virtue, as reflected in his journals, giving Tone a favourable opinion of him.

6.2 Reply to a Pamphlet, Entitled The Protestant Interest in Ireland ascertained: Creation of Common Ideology

After publishing An Argument... in August, Tone went to Belfast in October to establish the Belfast Society of United Irishmen, accompanied by Russell. The declaration and three-point resolution of the society, drafted by Tone, were undoubtedly in accord with his formula. Although he modified the third item in the resolutions he presented in July, the change from "the Catholics" to "Irishmen of every religious persuasion", may be seen as an emphasis on union as a nation, rather than as a softened expression. As the Presbyterian members of the Belfast Society agreed with his draft resolutions for setting up a Society, he naturally estimated the Belfast Presbyterians highly. While he had been disappointed by the divisions in July 1791, he made the acquaintance of radical Presbyterians who did not share the view of the conservative and influential wing of the ageing Volunteer movement. These contacts provided the basis of his hope of an alliance between the Catholic

47 Russell, Journals..., p.54ff.
On the other hand, the Dublin Society, established in December 1791, experienced difficulties from the outset. Though the Society was set up easily, political frictions between the members soon came to the surface. Drennan, as mentioned, planned to form a Mason-like secret society bound by oath, whereas Tone saw the Society as the general base of a united popular movement. When the proposal to have new members take the test, which Drennan would have drafted, was posed in the Society, the different principles of the two men caused a mutual repulsion, which was to become more serious in the course of time. Furthermore, two incompatible political streams came together in the society. One was the 1780s Volunteer-style reform tradition stemming from the ideal of a classical republic like Tandy’s, which had turned into Franco-philiac republicanism at that time; the other was the Humean or Burkean liberal constitutionalism shared by many Catholic members, which aimed to abolish the religious restriction of “elective” suffrage for the Commons and establish equal civil rights within the existing system of constitutional monarchy. Contrary to Tone’s expectation that the test would impede participation of common people, Drennan’s plan succeeded in the sense of a marketing strategy: it is a general psychological rule that tests and some secrecy stimulate a sense of curiosity and solidarity. The attack by John Toler—the Attorney General—on Tandy in early 1792 was a stone aimed at the most vulnerable point of the society: that is to say, the difference in political situation between the Catholics and others. The Catholic Relief Bill of 1792 was introduced on 25 January, which would remove the restrictions in education, intermarriage and access to the professions, but which did not give the permission to sit on grand juries, a legal right to arms and the franchise. Although the bill itself fell far short of the Societies’ claim for immediate abolition of the penal laws, those who supported it on the principle of union of the nation, realising the delicate situation, tried to keep calm and to demonstrate their unity while the 1792 Catholic bill was discussed in Parliament. However, Tandy could not overlook Toler’s insult in the speech, and in February demanded an explanation in a contentious way. His conduct resulted in his arrest “for the breach of parliamentary privilege”.

If the Society were not in a delicate situation, it would not have mattered as far as the solidarity of the society was concerned. However, concern about the fate of the bill made members differ as to what step to be taken. Some were annoyed with Tandy’s impatient conduct, others blamed him for his withdrawal in the middle of the quarrel. A proposal to publish the declaration and resolutions of the Dublin Society was put forward, with the intent of manifesting the lawful character of the society. The resolutions, although they did not mean direct

*Elliott, Wolfe Tone, p.162.*

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protest against his arrest, criticised the conduct of the government for its unconstitutional oppression of civil liberty. The proposal also envisaged adding the signature of each member of the Society to show that they stood fair and square behind it. Some Catholic members strongly objected for the reason that publication of their names might have an adverse effect on the progress of the bill. Opposing their objection, some “warmest partisans” of the Catholics were “greatly disgusted with their conduct”, while at the same time they criticised Tandy for his timid conduct. Tone, who became a pro-secretary in place of the arrested Tandy on 24 February onward, faced with serious rifts in the society, tried to cope with the difficult situation. The solicitous tone of the proceedings of the meeting on that date, conveys his attempt to calm their nerves. Drennan also understood their objection to the proposal as “prudent at least” for the moment.  

On the same day, Hamilton Rowan and a few other members declared that Edmund Burke’s A letter... to Sir Hercules Langishe ... on the subject of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, which came out on 22 or 23 February 1792, was unworthy of public notice, and presented a motion to expel Patrick Byrne, the liberal Catholic publisher, for publishing the pamphlet. Although the motion was withdrawn in the end, this happening shows non-Catholic members’ irritation at the self-interested attitude of the Catholics and a fear that their real concern was nothing but their own enfranchisement. In terms of the contents of Burke’s letter, Byrne, as a United Irish man, deserved to be blamed for publishing it, because, though an argument in the letter against the concept of Protestant ascendancy was a bold expression of liberal constitutionalism, the letter had some quite offensive remarks on Presbyterians. Treating Protestant Dissenters as if they were inner enemies, Burke attacked them. On the other hand, he made a case for the qualified enfranchisement of Catholics, stressing their obedience to the British constitution by contrast with the defiant Dissenters. Catholics in the society seemed insensitive to the feeling of Presbyterians. Drennan’s letter spells out his frustration and anxiety about their power in alliance with the Presbyterians:

It was resolved that it was not suitable to the dignity of any society to take notice of Edmund Burke’s scurrility against the Dissenters in his letter to Sir H. Langrishe. His son and Keogh have kept as clear of the Dissenters as possible, but the Catholics assist the charity subscriptions at the meeting-house, and this day near £300 was collected at Dr. Moody’s, ... a good deal of which was sent by Catholics. I think the Presbyterian parsons are pretty well

52 Edmund Burke, A Letter from the Right Hon’ Edmund Burke, M.P. in the kingdom of Great Britain, to Sir Hercules Langishe, Bart, M.P. on the Subject of the Roman Catholics of Ireland and the propriety of admitting them to the elective franchise... (Dublin, 1792).
After this friction, the second edition of *A letter... to Sir Hercules Langishe* was published with a comment by Patrick Byrne and the Catholic Committee, which said: "An opinion has been circulated that Mr. Burke's Letter upon the subject of the Roman Catholics is written in a spirit of hostility to the Dissenters, and with an intention to wound their feelings and injure their reputation". This passage reflects the friction in the Dublin Society. Declaring that "it was not any degree in Mr. Burke's intention to throw any imputation whatever on that great and respectable body, the Dissenters of Ireland", the comment sought to remove the misunderstanding about Burke's position. The Catholic Committee intended to conciliate the members of the United Irishmen by this comment.

The friction, however, was not simply sectarian. Despite the Catholic Committee's effort to paper over Burke's offensive attitude towards the Dissenters, Burke himself intended to make clear that support of Catholic emancipation was not to be dependent on democracy:

If the absurd persons... find no way of providing for liberty, but by overturning this happy constitution, and introducing a frantic democracy, let us take care how we prevent better people from any rational expectations of partaking in the benefits of that constitution as it stands.

In the pamphlet, he criticised both conservative Protestants and democratic Presbyterians. Dismissing the concept of Protestant Ascendancy as a misunderstanding of the British constitution, and the claim of natural rights as an alteration of the constitution into "a plebeian oligarchy", he grounded Catholic emancipation on actualising the British "liberal" constitution in Ireland. In his letter to Richard Burke on 19 February 1792, he openly expressed his discontent with political circumstances in Ireland. Portraying Ireland as "a country of monopoly" where only some people could enjoy partial freedom, a "liberty made up of penalties! a liberty made up of incapacities! a liberty made up of exclusion and proscription, continued for ages of four-fifths, perhaps, of the inhabitants of all ranks and fortunes!", he declared that such liberty was nothing but "the description of the most shocking kind of servitude".

By the same token, Burke in the pamphlet attacked the concept of Protestant ascendancy. He argued that the Coronation Oath in 1689, which provided that the sovereign of England must be a Protestant of the church of England, defined only the ecclesiastical authority of the constitution, namely a

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53 The Drennan Letters, p.85.
55 Ibid., p.597.
56 Ibid., p.642.
characteristic of the king, whose authority rested on his inherited status as head of the church, and not on statute; hence, the constitutional condition that the king must be a Protestant did not preclude him “from consenting to any arrangement which Parliament may make with regard to the civil privileges of any part of his subjects”. 

He continued that, in Ireland, however, the concept of Protestant ascendancy had been wrongly taken to mean that the British constitution banned Parliament from granting Catholics the franchise; consequently, those Catholics who, though they were “under proper qualifications inherent in the constitution that gives them”, had been “excluded from the British constitution”. As he said in his speech “On Conciliation with America”, he saw the stabilisation of the empire in letting “the Colonies always keep the idea of their civil rights associated with” the British Government and constitution. From this viewpoint, Ireland stood in “a state of civil servitude”, which “makes men subject to a state without being citizens”. He openly criticised those who favoured Protestant Ascendancy:

To them [Catholics] it is not an actual, and, if possible, still less a virtual representation. It is indeed the direct contrary. It is power unlimited, placed in the hands of an adverse description, because it is an adverse description. And if they who compose the privileged body have not an interest, they must but too frequently have motives of pride, passion, petulance, peevish jealousy, or tyrannic suspicion, to urge them to treat the excluded people with contempt and rigour.

For him, the crucial problem was, not the constitution itself, but the exclusion of many from the constitution. In other words, Ireland had a “civil” constitution as a framework, but it lacked “citizens” as its contents. Hence, he found the source of the constitutional defect in the penal laws:

You, who have looked deeply into the spirit of the Popery laws, must be perfectly sensible, that a great part of the present mischief, which we abhor in common (if it at all exists) has arisen from them. Their declared object was to reduce the Catholics of Ireland to a miserable populace, without property, without estimation, without education .... They divided the nation into two distinct bodies, without common interest, sympathy or connexion.

In this way, Burke, defining Catholic emancipation as a claim for constitutional liberty, led people to the advocacy of amendment of the penal laws.

Embracing Burkean constitutionalism, the Catholic Committee claimed Catholic Emancipation on the basis of religious toleration, one of the liberal principles of the British constitution. Their petition said:

[T]hey [i.e. the Roman Catholics of Ireland] ... humbly presume to submit to the House their

57 Ibid., p.606.
58 Ibid., p.601.
59 “On Moving his Resolutions for Conciliation with the Colonies, March 22nd 1775”, in Ian Harris (ed.), Edmund Burke Pre-Revolutionary Writings, p.265.
60 Edmund Burke, A Letter...to Sir Hercules Langishe, p.598.
61 Ibid., p.601.
62 Ibid., p.597.
intreaty [sic], that they should take into their consideration whether the removal of some of
the civil incapacities under which they labour, and the restoration the petitioners to some
share in the elective franchise, ... will not tend to strengthen the Protestant state, add new
vigour to industry, and afford protection and happiness to the Catholics of Ireland. 63

On the other hand, some members in the United Irishmen initially expected
Catholics to demand political participation as a democratic natural right. In the
friction between the Catholics and other sects, Tone realised the existence of a
fundamental difference between the argument of Catholics for their
emancipation and that of Presbyterians. How should this difference be dealt
with?

Just before the Letter... to Sir Hercules Langrishe was published in
February 1792, Tone had found in a pamphlet entitled Brief caution to the
Roman Catholics an impediment to forming an alliance between the Catholic
Committee and liberal Presbyterians. The pamphlet, claiming that their
obedience to the government would have “a desirable effect, in obtaining a
relaxation of the penal laws”, warned Catholics not to “place too great a reliance
on people of other religious persuasions, who offered their advice and assistance
unasked”. In reply to this pamphlet, Tone wrote an unpublished article entitled
A Short Answer to a “Brief caution to the Roman Catholics of Ireland”. Paying
considerable attention to intrigue by supporters of the Protestant constitution
against the formation of a united popular power, he called for the formation of
national union opposing the divide and rule by both Irish and British
government. As mentioned in Chapter 3, loyalty to “the government” had been
emphasised in the traditional Catholic emancipation movement. So far as this
ideology is concerned, Tone denounced it as the ultimate submission to the
monopolistic government. In this way, until January 1792, his Paineite
ideological framework was capable of guiding him in uniting the nation.

However, Burke’s argument in the letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe,
which, taking the liberal principles of the “existing” constitution as criteria,
sharply attacked the monopoly of Protestant ascendancy, brought a new
framework to Tone. Although Catholic leaders had not yet grasped the most
radical kernel of the letter, Burke’s logic enabled Catholics to criticise the
government on the ground of their loyalty and obedience “to the British
constitution”, and it also provided a common basis of liberal doctrine for each
sect. Finding the new liberal potential in the British constitution, Tone began to
rethink his ideological framework. He was to continue his efforts towards the
creation of common ideology until he published an address to the people of
Ireland on Bastille day in July. During the spring he wrote a draft to refute a
pamphlet entitled The Protestant Interest in Ireland ascertained. At that time,

63 P.R., XII(1792), p.125f.
although he had not yet become an assistant secretary of the Catholic General Committee, he associated with the leading Catholics. This means that the first step of his aim to “get at” their leaders was attained. For the next step, he needed to join them with liberal Dissenters. For this purpose, however, much more still remained to be done: the different “sense” of rights between the Catholic leaders and liberal Presbyterians, and the latters’ ill-feeling over Catholics’ close ties with Burke. Although both agreed on the line for civil rights on an equal footing with other sects, they differed in regard to their grounds for the rights themselves. Catholics, confining themselves to saying “the civil rights” of Catholics, tried to leave the basis for the rights ambiguous, to get support from the greatest numbers of people possible. However, this ambiguity irritated and disappointed some members of the United Irishmen. Especially, Presbyterians like Drennan saw Catholics as not claiming their natural rights but soliciting the King to grant them.

Tone actually had to paper over the fundamental difference between civil rights granted by the Crown and those which were the natural rights of man, when he planned to form an alliance between the radical Dissenters and the Catholics. In theory, only if Catholics claimed their civil rights on the basis of “democratic representation”, could the radical Dissenters consent to an alliance. However, the actual view and conduct of Catholics did not come up to his theoretical expectation.

The speeches at the general meeting of the Catholics on 23 March, which aimed to draw up a declaration of the Roman Catholic Committee, reveal that their basic logic is clearly that of Burkean constitutionalism, which justified the political institution (including rights) in terms of expediency for the maintenance of civilised society. The leaders stressed the close connection between the elective enfranchisement of Catholics and the general prosperity of Ireland: “the one cannot take place whilst the other remains unaccomplished ... it is the true interest of every individual in the nation to restore them [i.e. the political rights] to us”. Randal MacDonnell argued that if the Catholic peasantry were permitted to “take part in the general prosperity”, as new consumers, they would enlarge the domestic market. As to the reason why the repeal of the penal laws enabled them to gain access to prosperity, he answered that he saw prosperity among the Protestants, and that he knew the Catholics were “endowed with as great a share of natural ability and faculties”. 66 Although his speech displayed the middle-class concern about the narrowness of the domestic market, its reasoning was not convincing either for those had enjoyed the fruits of their monopoly or for those who had been excluded from the market.

Moreover, this weakness becomes clearer when the elective franchise became the subject of attention. John Keogh, replying to the allegation of antagonists that the Catholics were too ignorant and uneducated to be granted the elective franchise, said: "it could have no weight against the right of the Catholics, until it should have become a principle of the constitution, that it was 'knowledge', not 'property', that ought to be represented". Following him, MacDonnell put forward the same argument: "Is it however the faculties of the mind, or is it property, which is represented in Parliament?" [John] Sweetman, aware of the weakness of statements in favour of the elective franchise confined to economic arguments, made from the standpoint of the Catholic middle class, and which would imply a restricted franchise, commented that "the elective franchise, ... would operate as food and raiment to the lower order of our distressed and degraded brethren", because it was not "as speaking in a metaphor" but "the only means of obtaining for them those comforts". Towards the close of the meeting, Keogh made the same point, but less effectively. Three millions of unprotected peasantry needed the elective franchise as the "shield of the poor", which would put pressure on landlords who were candidates for elections; each lord, "to prevent his losing his election", would have to get votes for himself from the Catholic and hence establish a real relationship with them; accordingly, he would be obliged reluctantly to conciliate them with some social welfare. Keogh's argument ended in a lame conclusion that the landlords could only drive the poor Catholics to the mountains, but at least would not expel them from the country. "Thus Elective Franchise", he said, "is necessary, to protect the poor from utter misery, from worse than death".

The occasional deviation from the line of unqualified elective enfranchisement and the ad hoc reasoning of the leaders reveal fragmentation in their middle-class standpoint. Actually, the Catholic lower class was indispensable to the case for the effective emancipation of Catholics, because the Catholic total middle class was too small to campaign separately for their qualified enfranchisement. However, since they neither really united with the lower class, nor rested their claim for their rights on fundamental criticism of the existing exploitative system, in the eyes not only of the Protestants but the lower Catholics, they were to be seen as raising the question of the misery of the lower class only out of self-interest and in disregard of any serious concern about the real state of the lower class.

65 Ibid., p.5.
66 Ibid., p.9.
67 Ibid., p.9.
68 Ibid., p.18.
Tone’s *Reply to a pamphlet, entitled “The Protestant Interest in Ireland ascertained”* can be seen as having been written after the meeting, because he mentioned the declaration on that occasion. In addition to the vulnerability of the theoretical ground of the Catholic emancipation campaign, the uncritical attitude of the Catholic leaders towards the existing government made Tone realise the theoretical incompatibility between the Catholic political view and that of the radical Dissenters: political reform on the French principles. The essay discusses what rights the Catholics were claiming and on what ground; but, in its latter part, it shifts to another standpoint: on what ground they “should” claim. Compared with the *An Argument...*, where Tone clearly based his argument on Paineite principles of rights, his argument is slightly tentative and evasive, as its occasional ambiguous wording conveys. However, in the last two pages, rid of this hesitation, he declared that the civil rights of Catholics derived from their natural rights as men. What made him so tentative? It can be attributed to his deepened involvement with the Catholic campaign. Considering the repeated arguments against it from both wings, conservative Protestants and radical Dissenters, he found a contradiction in the Catholic question: if the civil rights of Catholics are legitimatized in the existing constitution, they must be granted by the Crown: in this case, radical Dissenters would blame them for being obedient to the authorities of the old regime, and therefore consequently regard them as not deserving of liberty. Otherwise, if they, as men, claimed their civil rights, which meant approval of an appropriate representative system, the claim would have an implication of altering the existing constitutional system, and hence the conservatives would accuse them of their disloyalty to the Protestant constitution, to which they assumed Catholics to have consented tacitly. Tone saw this incompatibility as that between Paineite theory of “mere [i.e., pure] right” and Lockean contract theory. He wondered why all arguments were either the “bustle about mere right, on one side”, or “tacit consent, on the other?”, and said: “[t]o this the only answer that can be given is a direct contradiction”.

Tone re-considered the contradiction from a realistic standpoint. “I confess I dislike abstract reasoning on practical subjects. I am buried in matter”, said he, taking up the question of man “as we find him in Ireland”. He presented a principle that if a man had something unjustly withheld from him, even if he has a right to it, he must recover it by law; he may not knock down those withholding it, and take it by force. He said: “I must apply to the country. Apply this principle to the Catholics”. Therefore, he argued that Catholics should not petition on the ground of rights themselves, but on the basis of

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lawfully “requesting” or “suing” for rights they once had held. His views have much in common with those of Locke. Locke supposed a state in which the appeal by the conquered to the law for justice was denied because of the lack of the common judge, to whom both the conquerors and the conquered may appeal, and to whom both were obliged to submit. About the question as to how the conquered should remedy the situation, he answered: “the Conquered, or their Children, have no Court, no Arbitrator on Earth to appeal to. Then they may appeal, ... to Heaven, and repeat their Appeal, till they have recovered the native Right of their Ancestors...”.

Then Tone said: “To the first it is only necessary to say, that it is not the natural rights of man, but the political rights of citizens, that we are to argue upon”. The importance of this remark should not be ignored. He gave precedence to the restoration of political rights in the actual constitution over the establishment of a new regime based on natural rights. Arguing that the political rights of Catholics were once established in the British constitution, he called for the restoration of the rights Catholics had enjoyed. In this way, he tried to avoid arguments on the theoretical basis of rights which might cause division among the people. In his view, whether political rights derived from natural rights, or from grant by the Crown, the crucial point was that the largest numbers of people are allowed to get into the political sphere; because, it is the rights of political participation which enable people to set up a case for real representation in a national assembly where they would be competent to change the principles of the constitution itself in a legitimate way. Otherwise, even if the self-appointed republicans maintained the concept of natural rights and French principles, if they criticised the backwardness of Catholics, they would never make common cause with Catholics and attain their purpose. In a fragment in the following year on parliamentary reform, Tone, alluding to those who, making light of Catholic emancipation, still advocated reliance on the Volunteers, pointed out the imperfection of “a national convention in arms” based on a classical republican notion of civil rights of independent citizens. “They saw, ... the imperfection of their own measure, unless accompanied by a reform in Parliament. They could not be always in arms, and they had no hopes of operating, save by fear, on a body, in whose election they had no voice”. Seeing the democratisation of the existing parliament as essential to political reform, he stressed the need for all the advocates of reform outside Parliament to line up behind the elective enfranchisement of Catholics.

70 Ibid., p.397f.
71 John Locke, ibid., p.386.
72 Tone, ibid., p.399.
73 Tone, “Reasons why the question of parliamentary reform has always failed in the Irish Legislature”, Life I, p.488.
When Tone made a common cause for “restoration of the political rights”, he appropriated the traditional slogan of British parliamentary reform: the restoration of the rights of “freeborn Englishman”, which meant the return to the free constitution of the ancient Anglo-Saxon. At the same time, he put aside Paineite theory, which dismissed the existing British constitution as not a genuine one established by people in a codified form, but an ideal made by the government. He argued that the Protestant religion was not of the essence of their constitution, because the latter “was ascertained” before the former had existence. This remark reveals his adoption of Burke’s logic and can be understood as an allusion to the ancient constitution:

The indefeasible liberty of the subject, and of that, the animating soul and spirit, the elective franchise, is co-existent with the constitution; it is a vital and inseparable part of it; therefore “in disfranchising the Catholics, the Parliament which did so were guilty of a subversion of the constitution, and not the descendants of those Catholics, who now...come humbly to demand a remnant of a remnant of their birth rights.”

Tone argued that it was Parliament itself rather than Catholics which subverted the genuine free constitution by giving it an anti-constitutional character. Under the term of the ancient constitution, he “newly” conceptualised the liberal principles of the British constitution.

Here, the traditional criterion of radical thought in studies of British social thought should be re-examined. In the dualistic framework between rights of man and those of Royal subjects, the use of the notion “ancient constitution” has been understood as a sign of obsession with the premodern view of right. Was Tone confined in an “recursive appeal to vanished traditions” like Thomas Muir—a Scottish Jacobin—and Cobbett, who grounded their arguments on the “ancient constitution of Britain”? 75

Muir’s testimony in his trial that he wished to “restore the Constitution to its purity in King Alfred’s time”, has been seen as evidence refuting Edward Thompson’s claim that Paine’s ‘natural right’ arguments succeeded in emancipating English radicalism from the retrospective appeal to the ancient rights. Michael Ignatieff, in portraying the attitude of the British radicals towards the ancient constitution, observed that “the mythology of ‘vulgar Whiggism’ survived the 1790s unscathed by Hume, Millar and Smith’s historicism”. When we consider the political thoughts of Tone and other radical leaders, however, their claim for the restoration of the ancient constitution cannot be seen simply as a nostalgic mythology, because, on the other hand,

74 Paine, Rights of Man, p.71.
75 Tone, “Reply...”, Life I, p.399.
their social view was certainly influenced by Hume and Smith. For instance, Charles Ryan, a leading Catholic, declared in his speech at the Catholic meeting that, if those who had charged the Catholic Committee's plan with imitation of the French Assembly "had been acquainted with the English classics, they would have seen it in Hume's 'Essay on a perfect Commonwealth'." In the Irish context at that time, there were two urgent needs: to secure the sovereignty of their native land and to create an integrated nation of Ireland. In this sense, the call for the restoration of ancient rights was not an unconscious expression of backwardness, but an ideological measure to assist their attainment.

Tone's concepts of "the indefeasible liberty of the subject" and of "the birth right" embrace some ambiguity. At first, they seem to be the Paineite notion of natural right. However, unlike Paine, from the logic of his argument it follows that there is no need for the nation to establish a new liberal democratic constitution, because a constitution already exists, though badly altered for the moment; all that is required is its restoration in its ancient form. His terminology in the essay does not let us answer the question as to what he meant by the term "subject", whether Royal subjects or independent individuals, and as to what the term "birth right" means, whether the rights of freeborn Irish under the ancient constitution or simply the rights of man. This ambiguity, however, should be understood as a tactical ploy rather than fickleness. Whether the constitution was new or restored, it did not matter for him, as far as it dictated liberal and democratic principles. The reason why he chose the latter was because it is more convincing for the public, and would more easily get a national consensus: as he remarked, "it is a common, yet a very gross falsehood, to say the people are prone to change; they are not". The idea of restoration was to be more clearly set out in "To the People of Ireland", an address in July 1792:

Impressed as we are with a deep sense of the excellence of our Constitution, as it exists in theory, we rejoice that we are not, like our brethren in France, reduced to the hard necessity of tearing up inveterate abuse by the roots .... Our is an easier and less unpleasing task.

However, Tone did not take this line only for expedient reasons. There was another implication: the re-establishment of sovereignty by means of the Crown of Ireland. Tone drew on Burke's definition of sovereignty. Burke, as mentioned above, asserted that what must be Protestant was not the British constitution but the king. In An Appeal from the New to Old Whigs, he set out this view more clearly:

We are members in a great and antient MONARCHY; and we must preserve religiously the true

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77 Catholic Meeting, Exchequer-street, Wednesday, October 31 (Dublin, 1792), p.4.
78 Tone, "Reply...", Life I, p.397.
79 N.S., 14-18 July, 1792.
legal rights of the sovereign, which form the key-stone that binds together the noble and well-constructed arch of our empire and our constitution. A constitution made up of balanced powers, must ever be a critical thing. He declared that the constitutional monarchy was “a thing perfectly susceptible of reform; perfectly susceptible of a balance of power”. At the same time, he stressed the significance of monarchy in terms of sovereignty:

every thing republican ... must be built upon a monarchy; built upon a real, not a nominal monarchy, as its essential basis; that all such institutions, whether aristocratic or democratic, must originate from their crown, and in all their proceedings must refer to it. Aware of the necessity of preserving hereditary sovereignty, Tone said in the address: “We have not to innovate, but to restore. The just prerogative of our monarch we respect and will maintain”. By “the prerogative of our monarch”, he meant the Crown of Ireland, which was seen as independent of the Crown of England. Accepting the mixed government under the Crown of Ireland, he saw it as a “beautiful system of government, so admirably suited to our situation, on our habits, and our wishes”. Just as English and Scottish radical reformers drew on a notion of an ancient constitution in Great Britain, Tone, influenced by Russell, sought its Irish version. It was important for the two men to base the mixed government on the Crown of Ireland, not on the British ancient constitution. Russell’s journal of the previous year shows that he had become interested in the nature of the Irish polity before it was altered by English influence. Furthermore, Tone attended the harpers' festival in Belfast where ideas of the Gaelic past and the Ossianic republic attracted notice. Although his impression of the festival itself was not favorable, his low opinion of it can be seen as his disappointment at its atmosphere and the attitude of its audience towards Gaelic culture and literature, rather than his indifference towards the Gaelic past. Contrary to Elliott’s view, we may say that the idea of the Gaelic ancient polity theoretically stimulated Tone. The ideal of restoration of the ancient free constitution as an invention had a real appeal. It was to be shared

81 Ibid., p.42.
82 Ibid., p.46.
83 N.S., 14-18 July 1792.
85 Elliott, Wolfe Tone, p.173f.; Elliott finds the inconsistency of this statement in “Address” with Tone’s former views in the “Reply...”. While he had accepted popular sovereignty “with his “adulation of Paine and his philosophy of breaking with the past”, he came to make “a call for a return to an original contract”. She indeed notices the theoretical change in his policy, but puts it down to his character: “Tone could trim his sails to the wind and take on board the criticisms of others”. This account overlooks the strategic necessity and importance of the change for the alliance between Catholics and Presbyterians, and leads to the underestimate of his progress towards the radicalisation of constitutionalism.
by liberal people of all sects and worked as a counter-ideology to the notion of
the Protestant constitution on which domestic monopoly rested. Furthermore,
it justified directly petitioning the king of Ireland, over the head of the Dublin
Castle. This re-interpretation of the constitution meant the lawful
deconstruction of the domestic monopoly. This idea was to be put into practice
in the Catholic campaign.

6.3 A Beam of Hope of Forming National Union: Summer of 1792

After May 1792, seeing the forthcoming Volunteer Corps review and
celebration on the Bastille day as the best occasion, Tone, as Catholic agent,
endeavoured to form an alliance with the Belfast Presbyterians. The event also
meant counter attack in the wake of the rejection of his resolution by the
Volunteer Corps and the Northern Whigs the previous year. His bitter
experience and resentment on that occasion enabled him to foresee what
difficulties would occur on the forthcoming Bastille Day. For him, the debate on
his address on the day would be a decisive battle with recalcitrant northern
Whigs: Henry Joy, the Belfast News Letter proprietor, Alexander Stewart, a
medical doctor from Lisburn, and the extreme “Right” wing of the Volunteer
Corps represented by Waddell Cunningham, Volunteer captain, and his
followers. As mentioned above, Tone found the armed demonstration of this kind
of Volunteer corps barren and not useful for the pursuit of real popular
representation in the Commons. Hence, he decided to challenge them on the
basis of acceptance of the united national movement, a principle demanding
immediate and unqualified Catholic emancipation. The fact that he persistently
tackled them on the subject in the debate shows his determination.

Tone prepared his ground. For this purpose, he prepared for the Catholics
the ideological ideal: the restoration of the harmonious past, which also could be
shared with the other sects in place of the Protestant constitution.
Furthermore, he needed to secure the support of Presbyterian activists in the
North, relying on the Russell-Neilson connection, which had formed a network of
democratic liberals in the North around the Northern Star and the Belfast
Society of the United Irishmen, which included some Presbyterian ministers:
Sinclair Kelburne of Belfast, William Steel Dickson of Portaferry, James Porter
of Grey Abbey. It was these men who actively supported the alliance between
the two sects at the debate on Bastille day.

Tone also sounded Drennan about his address for the celebration.
Although Drennan, with his inherent limitations, characterised it as adherence

*Tone, Life I, p.69. For the chief contributors to the Northern Star, see, R.R. Madden,
The United Irishmen, their lives and times, vol. iv, p.19.
to the existing constitution and abhorrence of a republic, and hence as "just the sentiments of the Catholics", he was prepared to accept it as "prudent and proper". He made light of Tone's policy while not really understanding his intentions. Drennan's view of the political campaign was deeply coloured by the old Volunteer attitudes, which saw conventions and demonstrations as the measure of representing the will of the people. In April, Drennan remarked that, although the Catholics, planning to address a message to the people of Belfast to make common cause with them, optimistically expected to have a reply from them as a body, it was "rash to say" that the Belfast people could "join in demanding Reform unless an adequate Convention" first considered the question. Presuming the forthcoming Belfast meeting in July to be "the ground work of a Provincial Convention", he went on: "This would put the Catholics to the trial, which I hope they would not decline; and if not, they will hang on from session to session, and perhaps at last be at the mercy of Government". This was the real attitude of Drennan and McTier, chief organisers of the meeting and members of the United Irishmen, towards the attendance of the Dublin representatives of the Catholic General Committee at the meeting. Despite his effort, there was no guarantee that Tone would gain a victory in the battle royal on Bastille day. His journal of the day portrayed the serious situation:

Crawford and Tandy frightened [sic] out of their wits. We are undone; shall be defeated; all the country corps decidedly against us, from the report of some seditious paper..., better to adopt some thing moderate, that shall include all parties; danger of disunion; risque of credit if we should even succeed by a small majority, which is the best that can be hoped. While Drennan took the line of threatening the government by the demonstrative power of a mass convention, Tone sought a petition backed up by a nationwide network on a scale massive enough to pressure the government into negotiation with the nation. Therefore, his real concern was at what level the Catholics and the Dissenters reached an agreement about a common petition campaign, and how many people could form the base of the campaign. After Tone and the deputation of the Catholic Committee arrived, he realised that there was an unfavourable wind blowing against the Catholics all over Belfast: there were malicious rumours about him and threats of violence by some Volunteer corps. Despite devoted supporters such as Neilson and William Sinclair, linen merchant and long-standing participant in the Volunteer reform campaign, he foresaw that, his address would be rejected by a large majority. Before the assembly started, Tone sounded other representatives of the celebration council about their willingness to propose his address. Their answers were overwhelmingly gloomy and in favour of withholding it. At this

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87 The Drennan Letters, p.88.
88 Tone, "Journal on 14 July 1792", Life I, p.158.
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stage, disappointed at such views, Tone prepared to risk putting forward his original address, regardless of the likelihood of defeat, because he would not compromise with the anti-Catholic bigots challenging the national union. He supposed that even if the address were completely rejected, the result would enable the Catholic leaders and himself to realise to what extent the Presbyterians were actually in support of the Catholic emancipation. Sinclair consented. However, Tone at the last minute decided to revise a expression which explicitly referred to the need of the reform including "the Catholics", and substituted "equally include all sects and denominations of Irishmen" for "the Catholics". This alteration was exactly the same as he did when he prepared the resolution for the Bastille Day the previous year, and which differed with the original little in its denotative meaning. At the outset, Drennan's address: *To the National Assembly of France* was presented to the meeting. According to Martha McTier’s letter to her brother Drennan on that day, Henry Joy the day before had foiled Samuel McTier, who had proposed Drennan’s address to the committee of the Northern Whigs, and the last paragraph referring to the Catholics was removed from his original. * Without this paragraph, the revised address was accepted unanimously. It was followed by Tone’s address. Despite the modification he had made, his address occasioned a protracted debate. As he had expected, Joy and Cunningham were against the address, and proposed an amendment supporting the gradual emancipation of the Catholics. Joy, seeing through Tone’s ploy, attacked his phrase of “equally include all sects”, and proposed to have attached a proviso that the emancipation of the Roman Catholic brethren should be gradual. However, as John Gray points out, his amendment appeared irrelevant to the subject which the clause of the address referred to, namely political reform. Furthermore, it sounded to some people as if Joy were trying to put forward emancipation, because the address did not directly mention it. Therefore, even the *Northern Star* in reporting his speech referred to “the confusion of his position he found himself in”.* On the other hand, the address was warmly supported by a considerable number of people included Kelburn, Dickson, and Neilson. It is noteworthy that those supporters understood Tone’s expedient policy for national union. Kelburn, stressing the restoration of the birth right, said: "[I]t is time to quit this foolery about giving, and join hands and voices with your brethren, to recover the birth-right which you both have lost". He was followed by Thompson. Thompson articulated the essence of Kelburn’s speech. He observed:

[H]e [i.e. Kelburn] should consider it as admitted, and confine himself to that of expediency, which seemed the only ground of opposition now existing; and he would weigh expediency

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89 *The Drennan Letters*, p.89f.
against expediency. It was not only expedient, but absolutely necessary, that every Irishman who wished for reform and for freedom, should closely unite, and cease to be divided by names...  

The debate ended in Tone's victory by an overwhelming majority. It should be attributed not only to his subtle wording but to the firm ground of his policy for the formation of a united nation. Some individuals and some Volunteer corps withdrew from the body of the united movement, but unexpected numbers of people remained in favour of the Catholics. Tone had in effect gained the return-match.

6.4 Seeking to Mediate a Sectarian Conflict in the North: Autumn of 1792

At that time, Ulster Volunteer corps varied in their attitudes towards Catholics. Although some were strongly against them, some served as a “peace keeping force”. Tone needed to lead them to line up against any outbreak of sectarianism. In May, a sectarian conflict between the Catholic Defenders and Protestants Peep-o-Day Boys broke out in Rathfriland. Samuel Barber, Dissenter minister of Rathfriland and the most democratic liberal pamphleteer in the tithe dispute mentioned in Chapter 3, sent a letter to the Northern Star. The letter said that he negotiated with both parties, and led them to an agreement, “to forgive and forget all past injuries and insults, and to be good friends in future”. Although this portrayal may be a simplified one, his view of British colonial policy dividing people and putting them against each other, suggests the lines on which he approached both parties. Furthermore, the Northern Star made public the news that the Roman Catholics of Wexford and neighbourhood had proposed a toast to Barber and Kelburn on 12 July. This coverage shows that the newspaper was networking in favour of those who sought for the union of the nation, and made efforts to check the outbreak of sectarian clashes. In Rathfriland, however, the peace broke down just two days after Tone’s victory. Tone and Neilson hastened there, and intervened in the dispute to settle it. At the same time, as a result of Neilson’s suggestion that some Catholic leaders should accompany them, Keogh also joined on the way. In this way, their involvement in the sectarian disturbance in County Down led them to have a concern with regional politics outside the pale of the urban middle-class ones. In August, Keogh visited Down again accompanied by...

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91 N.S., 14-18 July, 1792.
92 For the last, see, N.S., 12-16 May 1792; for the thanks expressed by Wexford Catholics on 12 July 1792, see, W. D. Bailie, “The Reverend Samuel Barber 1738-1811: National Volunteer and United Irishman”, in Challenge and Conflict: Essays in Irish Presbyterian History and Doctrine, p.83.
93 N.S., 12 July 1792.
Tone and Neilson. This time, they attended a regional meeting of the Catholic Committee, and had a very favorable opinion of Dr Plunket, Bishop of Meath, as mentioned in Chapter 3.

At this stage, 5000 copies of an anonymous address entitled *To the presbyterians of the province of Ulster*, generally called “Common Sense”, were disseminated during September. The address was initially designed to warn the Presbyterians and Protestants in County Down that some powerful Protestant families - the Beresfords and Lord Annesly - were attempting to drive them to become sectarian and to clash with the Catholics with the intent of securing their own partial interests under the existing Protestant ascendancy. It argued that as long as Protestants were taxed without their real representatives in the Commons, they as well as Catholics would remain slaves, because the Protestant ascendancy was of advantage not to the Protestants as a whole, but only to the “junto”, a small group monopolising offices and ecclesiastical titles. “Who encourage divisions among the people, and who urge the presbyterians to quarrel with the catholics?”, the author went on, “The very men and their dependents who thus fleece both, tax them and tithe them”. The principle of his argument that people should not be taxed without representation in the parliament, is basically the same as American colonists adopted in the War of Independence. On the other hand, it claimed that “every Irishman” should be raised to the rank of a freeman. While the address stressed unfairness in the taxation without representation, however, a question of qualification of franchise was left untouched.

The address adverted to the supporters of political reform and Catholic enfranchisement. It should not be overlooked that the author mentioned some English supporters: Fox, Erskine and others, and did not refer to Burke. As to Erskine, Tone directed his attention to his political activity as early as July 1790, and had a favorable opinion of him: “Erskine, who, in England, is not looked upon as a very sound lawyer, knows more law than the twelve Judges of Ireland, plus the Chancellor”. Erskine as well as Fox, severally confronting oppression by the British Government after the declaration of the war with France, went on making a case for reform and against the war. Although he had no direct association with Tone and other liberal radicals in the United Irishmen, his conduct was to be a guide and stimulus for remaining radical reformers after 1794. Furthermore, the author of the address mentioned Irish supporters: Grattan, Forbes, Curran, Arthur Brown, Butler, Hamilton Rowan, Tandy, Moira in the Protestant camp, and Dickson, Black, Kelburn, Birch, Barber in the Presbyterian camp. At that stage, he took no account of the difference among these supporters and believed that there was possibility to make common

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54 Tone, “Fragments of Memorandums previous to 1791”, *Life* I, p.140.
Although the argument against taxation without real representatives in the Commons is the same as Keogh made in his pamphlet in 1784, the names mentioned in the descriptions of regional, domestic and British politics, are outside the pale of Keogh’s knowledge. The latter part represents Neilson’s and Tone’s view. The address has been attributed to Keogh. His authorship is based on two sources: the informer Collins’s account on 3 May 1793 and Drennan’s on 3 March 1794. However, both of them reflected only a rumor within the United Irishmen and the proceedings point to a different hand, probably a northern associate of Tandy. On 21 September 1792, for the first time Collins got a copy of the address, he said: “The chairman [i.e. James N. Tandy] read ... also a printed letter, several thousand of which were distributed at the review [i.e. that of the Volunteers at Docmara in County Antrim]”. Then, in the meeting of the Dublin society on 12 October, a motion, which had been noticed a week before, was made to dismiss Tandy from the chair for the reason of the neglect of his duty. His close friends, aware of his involvement in the Belfast society supported his conduct, and his own account of his activity “received the unanimous thanks of society”. From this result, Collins judged Tandy to be the central figure and remarked: “so high does Napper stand with his troops”. On the other hand, Drennan in Dublin, although usually well-informed about the circumstances in Belfast, was not told in advance about the address and Tandy’s activity in the North. Hence, he several times expressed disapproval in his letters and portrayed it as “a most scurrilous personal paper”. At that stage, Collins and Drennan alike, actually outside the political milieu of the North, could not identify those behind Tandy. The documents concerning the Dublin Society reveal that some members, seeing a scheme behind Tandy and Common Sense as a Catholic conspiracy, which the society could not control, supposed Keogh a leader. This apprehension was evoked by the mass propaganda involved in the preparation for the Catholic meeting and petition at the end of 1792. Collins reported Keogh’s activity in November 1792 in a hint of alarmist tone: “Keogh attends all public meetings in the country for the purpose of pro[pagating the knowledge of the slavery of his brethren].” The charging of Tandy on 14 March 1793 by the committee of constitution with distributing the address in Louth in September 1792 and taking a Defender oath in March 1793,
make the context of the document clearer. The address seems to have a place in the Neilson-Tone strategy of promoting union amid the sectarian divisions in County Down in the summer of 1792. It was Tone also who had persuaded Tandy to participate in the activity in the North, because Tone said in his memoir in 1796 that “it did not require much argument to show him the impossibility of attaining a Republic by any means short of the united powers of the whole people, ... he therefore ... gave up the certain influence which he possessed (and well earned) in the city [i.e. Dublin].”

After the Catholic sub-committee secured considerable support from the Presbyterians for alliance between them, they had set in motion the election of delegates from each county to the Catholic Convention which met on 3 December. Furthermore, a few well-informed Catholic men joined the United Irishmen over the year: Edward Lewins, attorney and later a member of the Catholic convention, was admitted on 9 March 1792 and took the test on 6 July; Dr Thomas Ryan, Physician and later a member of the Catholic convention, was admitted on 6 July and took the test on 31 August. They were to be long-standing Catholic radicals, whose speeches especially at the Catholic meeting in March 1795 were to attract Arthur O’Connor’s attention. After 1793 Lewins became a prominent leader of the United Irishmen, and later went to France to negotiate for military aid accompanied by O’Connor. Furthermore, according to Francis Higgins’ letter of 24 October 1797, Ryan became a member of the committee for collecting articles for *The Press*, the newspaper which O’Connor set up in September 1797. Just after Ryan joined the Dublin Society, he started playing a front role as a Catholic representative in the Society. On the day that Ryan took the test and signed, Butler moved that a committee of nine should be set up to “revise the constitution of the society and to prepare an address to the people of Ireland”, and Ryan, as well as Tone and Drennan, became a member of the committee. Drennan saw the appointment as a intended sharing of roles among the Catholic leaders and observed in November: “There is an interior Cabinet of the Catholics here, who are I believe Keogh, Ryan, Tone, Warren, McCormick, MacDonnel and Byrne and Braughel [sic].” In this way, Tone, though virtually absent from meetings of the United Irishmen

101 For the attack and charge of Tandy by the government, see McDowell, “Proceedings...”, p.69, p.71; R.J. Coughlan, *Napper Tandy* (Dublin, 1976), p.95-100.
105 Higgins, Rebellion papers, 620/18/14-15.
107 *The Drennan Letters*, p.96.
in the course of 1792, seems to have formed a network to unite the reform campaign and that of the Catholic enfranchisement movement.

Tone and the Catholic sub-committee agreed that they should not stress the merit of Catholic emancipation as they did at the previous petition, and adopted a wiser measure to convince the Protestants that the Catholics deserved elective enfranchisement, that is to demonstrate how the representative system worked well within the Catholic camp. A circular letter of the Catholic Sub-committee - the so-called Byrne letter -, published in the Dublin Evening Post on 6 September, became a “principal topic of domestic politics”. Sarcastically alluding to the backwardness of the existing establishment, it explained the advantage of the representative system: “under a system which is thus REPRESENTATIVE, and where the trust is revocable at pleasure, SEDUCTION cannot be practised, nor can DIVISION again take place.” However, contrary to the intention of the Catholic sub-committee, the corporation of the city denounced the letter as a plan of a French democracy, so that it came up for public discussion.

The Catholic General Committee had a meeting on 31 October 1792 to respond to the Corporation of the city. It is interesting that most of the speakers took a very moderate line. As to the rights they claimed, for instance, Geoghegan declared: “We are not seeking the naked theoretical Rights of Man, it is the established practical Rights of Citizens; it is the privileges of British subjects; it is those privileges which the Constitution warrants”. This was less backwardness of Catholics in their understanding of human rights, than a calculated moderation in accordance with Tone’s strategy to maximise Protestant supporters. The speakers, aware of their backers in the Protestant camp, emphasised that they did not claim power but solicited legal protection and equal enjoyment of rights, and expressed their gratitude to supporters of the Catholic emancipation: some MPs, the citizens of Belfast, the Volunteers of Rathfriland and Ballymoney in Ulster, the United Irishmen of Dublin and Belfast, the Protestant Freeholders of Cork. The fact that the Volunteers of Rathfriland are specified implies that the events behind Tone’s and Russell’s summer visits to County Down and the publication of “Common Sense” at the outset of September had loomed large in the strategy. The Catholic Sub-committee judged that there was a real possibility of making common cause with Protestants. Thomas Ryan’s speech pointed out what common claim they could make. He said that only a part of the Protestants,

108 Catholic Meeting, Exchequer-street, Wednesday, October 31 (Dublin, 1792), p.4.
109 D.E.P., 6 September 1792.
110 Catholic Meeting...October 31,, p.29f.
111 Ibid., p.51.
enjoyed the blessings of the Constitution under the corrupt election system; for the majority of Protestants the House of Commons did not speak, so that they had "nothing but weakness" and refused "to receive strength". Despite all its moderate tone, some parts of his speech show his radical attitude towards the Castle party and the British empire, which in fact he saw as their real enemies: The pulse of the Castle must cease to beat if the people refuse to supply the streams of life. I hope we shall hear no more of denunciations of wrath, or the unfolded terrors of the British empire, directed against a numerous body of subjects whose only crime is to be miserable, and whose only presumption is to be less so.  

Keogh also saw the Castle party and its followers as the real oppressors, and suggested calling them "Monopolists", in lieu of the general term "Protestants". However, unlike Ryan, he took a amicable line on the empire and denied separation from the empire. This is not surprising, because they planned to petition the king as the Crown of Ireland for the restoration of the rights for which the "genuine" free constitution of Ireland had provided, according to the strategy which Tone had devised. Tone had chosen the "petition" to the King "of Ireland" as the most effective constitutional measure. On Richard Burke, who suggested addressing the king in lieu of petitioning, he commented in his journal: "R. Burke ... very foolish. Proposes that the Committee ... shall not petition, but address the King, to complain of the Grand Juries. Nonsense! What can the King do to the Grand Juries?” Tone's strategy elicited some favourable response. Right after the letter of the Corporation of the city appeared, a anonymous letter entitled A Freeman of the City of Corke, An Answer to the letter... came out. The author agreed with the idea of the restoration of the ancient rights of free citizens, and declared that the right Catholics requested to restore was as "ancienC as that of Protestants, and of the time when "the Catholic religion, and free constitution of England and Ireland, existed in 'unity' for ages before John Calvin or Martin Luther were heard of". This pamphlet can be seen as consent by a liberal Protestant to the line which the Catholic leaders took. The plan of direct petition to the King was also sensible. Because, it enabled the Catholic leaders to evade the barrier of Castle power and negotiate directly with the king and his ministers in Britain. Hence, at the Catholic Convention in December, the leaders, though anticipating the refusal of the Castle to transmit their petition to the king, deliberately tried to solicit the transmission, and immediately after the refusal by the Castle started the procedure for sending a delegation to the king. It was

112 Ibid., pp.20-25.
113 Ibid., p.32, p.42.
114 Tone, “Journal on 19 November 1792” in Life I, p.208.
115 A Freeman of the City of Corke, an Answer to the letter addressed by the Mayer, Alderman, Sheriffs and Commons of the City of Dublin, to the Protestants of Ireland (Cork, 18 Sep. 1792), p.12.
the ideology of restoration which underpinned their conducts and measures. The
deleagtes successfully negotiated with the British ministers, and their
endeavours were rewarded with civil rights, though with some limitations, in the
following session of parliament. 116

Although concealed under the mild idea of restoration, the actual social
perspective of some Catholic leaders was very radical. For example, Edward
Sweetman, at a meeting of the freeholders of the county of Wexford on
September 22, attributed the destruction of the ancient free monarchy to
English influence:
The honor of the Irish Crown has been perpetually violated by a perpetual breach of faith
with the Irish, ever since our English ancestors first landed in this island. ... They in justice,
became entitled to the benefit of that law [English common law]. -Instead of this, every
means which fraud could invent, avarice suggest, or violence enforce, were employed to
plunder and destroy the brave and simple aborigines of the isle, whilst the duty of their Kings
... slumbered or rather presided over these cruel outrages upon human nature.
Furthermore, he pointed out that England “wished to throw the whole blame of
those horrible and absurd oppressions ... upon the English settlers”. 117 This view
is very similar to Samuel Barber’s which is mentioned in Chapter 3. Barber
portrayed a power construction in a colonised state as a duplex subjugation. He
wrote that those who had been oppressed in their native land settled in a new
land, and themselves became oppressors on the natives there; on the other
hand, the government of their home land, putting aside its own guilt for the
initial oppression, blamed the settlers for oppression in the colony. 118 It is the
recognition of this power structure which enables the settlers and the natives to
find the government as a common enemy and seek reconciliation in making
common cause against it. In this way, the union of the Irish nation was realised
in the resistance based on fundamental constitutionalism, namely “restoration”.

116 According to Bartlett, the Catholic Relief Act of 1793 granted “the franchise ‘without
any limitation but as Protestants hold it’; selection to grand and petty juries; power to endow
universities and schools; the privilege of carrying arms subject to a property qualification; an
end to restrictions on Catholic personal property; numerous civil offices to be opened to
Catholics and the possibility of their serving as officers in the army or navy”. (The Fall and
Rise of the Irish Nation, p.165) However, since the franchise was only elective, Catholics failed
to gain seats in parliament. In this sense, those who had claimed the total emancipation
were unsatisfied.

117 The Speech of Edward Sweetman, Captain of a late independent company, at a meeting
of the freeholders of the county of Wexford, convened by the sheriff, on September 22, 1792
(Dublin, 1792), p.5.

118 Samuel Barber, Remarks on a Pamphlet..., p.36f.
Chapter 7:
THE INTERNATIONAL LIBERATION CAMPAIGN: A SPREADING WAVE

If you shall have convinced the people of this country, that instead of reciprocal advantage, nothing is to be reaped from their connection with England, but supremacy and aggrandizement on one side, and a costly venality, injury, insult, degradation, and poverty on the other.

Arthur O'Connors

Judging from the speech which has immortalised you, I am satisfied we are agreed as to the grievance of Ireland.

Theobald Wolfe Tone

7.1 The Arrival of the Activists from Revolutionary France

While Tone sought a united national movement, he was also aware of the invisible shackles of the British empire in the domestic politics of Ireland. According to his formula, "the sole constitutional mode by which that influence could be opposed, was by a complete and radical reform of the representation of the people in Parliament". In practice, however, such reform itself was prevented by the "unconstitutional" influence of Britain. The revolution of 10 August 1792 in France and the emergence of Girondin government gave him another possibility to remove the British influence, though in an unconstitutional mode. Despite its imperialistic implications, the "export of revolution" by the Girondin government stimulated many liberals in Europe to join an international movement for the liberation of nations from old empires. Revolutionary France not only became a republic but served as a guardian of nations. These two aspects led activists to make approaches to the French government for two different purposes: republicanism and nationalism. In Ireland, some backers of fundamental constitutionalism (radicals) like Tone intended to use French military power for the independence of their country. However, friction was to arise between their perspective, fundamental constitutionalism, and republicanism.

Towards the end of 1792, some Irish supporters of Republican France came back from France. In the course of their visit, Arthur O'Connor and Richard Hely-Hutchinson had witnessed the establishment of the republic. Both men were MPs, and the latter was a known supporter of Catholic emancipation. O'Connor's close friend, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, who stayed in France at that time, joined a political circle of British and Irish residents in Paris, in which they shared the idea of international revolution. John and Henry

3 Tone, Life I, p.493.
Sheares also associated with them. This group was strongly influenced by the Girondins and by the Cercle Social, led mainly by Brissot, a leading advocate of an “international crusade for liberty”. As to the connection between the Girondin and the Anglo-Irish group, Gilles Le Biez, referring to the fact that Irish affairs were reported and publicised in France by the Girondin and Cercle Social newspapers edited by Brissot and other Girondins, attributes their connection to the fact that many Girondins had lived in London during the 1780s, and also to a similarity of liberal political views between the United Irishmen and them. Paine, Oswald, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, William Jackson, Thomas Muir and the Sheares brothers were involved in the Cercle Social. On 19 November, the National Convention resolved to offer fraternity and assistance to every nation seeking liberation:

The National Convention declare, in the name of the French nation, that they will grant fraternity and assistance to all those people who wish to procure liberty, and they charge the Executive Power to send orders to the Generals to give assistance to such people, and to defend citizens who have suffered, or are now suffering in the cause of liberty.

This so-called November decree encouraged the British and Irish liberal activists in France to pursue the idea of international revolution in accordance with the Girondin ideal of universally united republics of commerce. Therefore, at least from the resolution in November to the collapse of the Gironde in May of the following year, not only Irish political activists but others whose native lands were subject to old empires lived in hopes of a new era. On the day the decree was resolved, some British and Irish liberal residents in Paris assembled at White's Hotel. Among the organisers of the meeting, was Edward Fitzgerald. Robert Smith, an English nobleman, and Fitzgerald proposed several toasts: to the “approaching National Convention of Great Britain and Ireland”, “May Revolution never be made by halves” and so on. Moreover, a speech by General Dillon had a significance for Irish liberals. Dillon, who was fighting against armed intervention by the Austrian empire at that time, expressed “his willingness, when called on, to perform, if necessary, similar service to his own country [Ireland]”, and proposed to a toast to the “People of Ireland, and may Government profit by the example of France, and Reform prevent revolution!”.

The November decree was adverted to in a report on the proceedings of the French National Convention in the Northern Star on 28 November-1 December, and the festivities at White’s Hotel were taken up in the following issue on 1-5 December. As early as 24 November, the editorial of the Northern Star applauded republican France for its liberation war:

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* N.S., no.96, 28 Nov.-1 Dec. 1792; also D.E.P., 4 Dec. 1792.
* N.S., no.97, 1 Dec.-5 Dec. 1792; also D.E.P., 6 Dec. 1792.
See FRANCE FREE!! But look farther, see her FREEING THE NATIONS!! - her victories have succeeded each other more rapidly, than you could recount them - She has planted the Tree of Liberty in the land of Tyrants, from the Mediterranean to the North Sea. 

News of the decree and of the meeting led liberals to see the French army as “the troops of liberty”, a force for universal liberation among nations. However, the liberals differed on the question as to from what the Irish nation should be freed? Fundamental constitutionalists like Tone would answer from England, the mother land of the British empire, while classical republicans like Drennan would say from the monarchy.

This fundamental difference had become clear since the establishment of French republican government in August. The classical republicans in the Volunteer tradition began to follow the example of France. On the other hand, Tone, resting the Catholic emancipation campaign on fundamental constitutionalism, was considering the merits and demerits of an alliance with liberal Protestant politicians who held the same ideological purpose. He was under the apprehension that, if the alliance was restricted to a political bargain to expel the Beresford party from the Castle, the Catholic emancipation campaign would give up “the question of reform, and that all efforts he had made since the year before “towards effecting an union between the Dissenters and the Catholics” would be in vain. On the other hand, realising the fact that the Dissenters on whom Catholics could actually rely were merely those in Belfast, he observed: “if they [Catholics] were properly supported by the body of the Dissenters, they would keep faith; but the fact is, they are not”. Furthermore, he foresaw that the bargain would strengthen the English influence in Ireland and lead Catholics to the support of Government. The target of his criticism of the existing government was not the crown but the oligarchy:

the crown, as it is improperly said, but more truly the oligarchy, has already much too great a portion of power in our system; which power I have never hitherto known them to exercise for any good purpose, and which they would be less likely ... to use for that end, inasmuch as I conceive English influence would be considerably increased. 

Tone sought to undermine the oligarchy by a united national movement, while the classical republican activists, influenced by France, sought to democratise the parliament. On the other hand, he was unsatisfied with the political view of the Catholics. As to Keogh's argument for Catholic emancipation, Tone commented that it made “the question a mere matter of convenience”; it should be put “on the broad basis of right; lucky that both are very compatible, and strongly support each other”. Aware of this weakness, he saw his duty in procuring the most possible political freedom for Catholics, with the hope that

7 N.S., no.94, 21 Nov.-24 Nov. 1792.
8 Tone, Life I, p.186f..
9 Ibid., p.185.
“[t]he Catholics having enjoyed a qualified degree of freedom for a few years, would come to think like other people, and especially from the information which would naturally accompany the prosperity consequent on their emancipation”. 10 These sentiments in his journal on 29 September 1792 reveal the distinctive features of fundamental constitutionalism.

A scheme was put forward in the middle of November to organise new Volunteer Corps modeled on the French National Guard. The informer Collins wrote on 16 November that there was a “plan for recruiting the volunteer corps and for forming new ones on a very large scale”. 11 Tone was a member of the founding committee of the new corps, and suggested the removal of the crown from its emblem. In terms of the Catholic question, the political situation at the end of 1792 was very delicate. The first parade in December of the new corps in such a situation would seem to have been highly disadvantageous. Despite Richard Hely-Hutchinson’s efforts to negotiate with Dublin Castle about the transmission of the Catholic petition to the King, the Castle spurned the approach. Accordingly, the Catholic sub-committee had to arrange the direct presentation of the petition to the King. The direct submission of the petition to the King was not an unforeseeable result. Tone himself had designed it in their initial plan which expected rejection by the Castle. He indeed regarded events as an untimely coincidence, but let the Volunteer scheme go on. Several years later, in his journal of 7 February 1795, he denied any deep involvement in the national guards scheme and the publication of an address by the United Irishmen to the Volunteers of Ireland. Although this comment was made when Catholic leaders recommended Grattan to procure Tone a post in the Fitzwilliam administration, it should not be seen merely as self-justification as he had wider differences with some members of the Dublin Society on an over-forceful policy. Retrospectively he recorded:

[S]ince May 1793, I had never attended its meetings, or taken any part in its concerns, which conduct I had adopted in consequence of an address, carried totally against my judgment, and calling on the Catholics, immediately on the passing of their bill, to come forward and demand a reform, a measure which I looked upon as mischievous and insidious. 12

In his journal of 23 June 1796, he again adverted to the scheme: “the National Volunteers ... did such mischief in Ireland”. 13 His portrayal of the meeting on 20 November 1792 for forming new Volunteer corps conveys doubt or criticism: “Is that quite wise? Who cares? The parties do not seem quite hearty in the business, and it is likely, after all, the corps will come to nothing”. Disgusted at the quarrel between Protestants and Catholics at the meeting, Tone felt that,

10 Ibid., p.187.
12 Tone, Life I, p.121f..
13 Tone, Life II, p.133.
though the participants had “truly spirited and patriotic character ... nobody universally and at all times right” conducted themselves. 14

Despite his reluctance, why did he dare to become one of eight secretaries of the new Volunteer corps committee? 15 The scheme should not be considered simply as “the United Irish-inspired Volunteer revival” as Elliott says. To see it as a “revival” makes us overlook the essence of the matter. The important points are two: first, what circumstances required forming a “new” organisation; secondly, why was there a need to do it at that time. The new uniforms of which Rowan ordered one thousand were designed to demonstrate the difference from the old one. Elliott crucially points out that “the ‘National Guard’ experiment alienated many old Volunteers”, but it should be seen less as a fault than as an accomplishment of the initial aim to organise new Volunteer corps. 16 One possible answer is increasing tensions in domestic political conditions. During the summer, Tone had bitter experience of the bad effects of the old Volunteer tradition in the North, which sometimes served as a tool of regional sectarian Protestant leaders to oppress the Catholic masses. Furthermore, Tone could see that the political trend towards the war with Republican France would make the leaders more reactionary. Whether the Volunteer corps come into line with the united national movement, or with supporters of the existing monopoly, was a crucial issue at that moment. Therefore he agreed to the formation of a new national battalion separated from the old Volunteer corps, in order to keep the corps free of the influence of the sectarian leaders. In this sense, the Northern Star, accepting the line which the Dublin Society took, criticised the old Volunteer corps and advocated changing them in accordance with the new corps in Dublin. 17

However, the “National Guard” scheme gradually deviated from the intention of fundamental constitutionalists. The toasts by the Belfast Second Society of United Irishmen at their anniversary celebration on 7 December represent an anti-monarchical tendency: to the “Republic of France - and may every kingdom on earth become free”; to the “day on which the national convention of France decreed assistance of all people struggling for liberty”; “A speedy crush to all despots; -whether Kings, Grand Juries, or Corporations”; “may ... kings feel their insignificance”. 18 Furthermore, other toasts reveal that the ideology of the Second Society was based on the ideal of classical republic. They toasted “The National Army of Ireland” and “The approaching National Conventions of England, Scotland and Ireland”. Both toasts reflect a National

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15 Ibid., p.207.
17 *N.S.*, 5-8 Dec. 1792.
18 *N.S.*, 5-8 Dec. 1792.
Battalion and convention campaign, in which Hamilton Rowan and William Drennan took the lead.

At the outset of the new Volunteer corps scheme, Drennan was totally outside the scheme. He was chairman of the Dublin Society, but not a member of the committee for the new corps, which Rowan, a secretary of the Dublin Society, chaired. Drennan mistakenly viewed the scheme for the new Volunteer corps as originating from the Catholics. This mistake stemmed from his identification of Tone with the Catholic sub-committee, and, seeing the scheme as a proposal by the Catholics, he was worried about its threat to the union of the old Volunteer corps in Ulster. This understanding of the actual state led him to write “an Address to the Volunteers of Ireland”, which was published on 14 December. This address fully reflected Drennan’s classical republicanism, and by the same token, meant a deviation from the fundamental constitutionalist line of the United Irish societies. The address, opposing the Proclamation issued by government, claimed a right of having and using arms as one of inherent rights: “Citizen Soldiers, to arms! ... Every man should become a Soldier in the defence of his rights. ... We now address you as Citizens, for to be citizens you become Soldiers”. This address was harmful to Tone’s strategy, in which Catholic emancipation was supposed to precede political reform. Whereas Tone had based the case for Catholic emancipation on the liberal principles of the British constitution, Drennan argued for Catholic enfranchisement on the principles of his republican democracy:

We ... wish for Catholic emancipation without any modification, but still we consider this necessary enfranchisement as merely the portal to the Temple of National Freedom. ... it is narrow, when compared to the capacity and comprehension of our beloved principle. ... The Catholic cause is subordinate to our cause.

Moreover, Drennan saw the Catholic convention, which had begun on 3 December, not as a delegated body meeting, with the intent of petitioning the King of Ireland, but as an exercise of the direct democracy which he sought to establish:

For both these purposes [i.e. Catholic emancipation and representative legislature], it appears necessary that provincial conventions should assemble preparatory to the convention of the Protestant People. The Delegates of the Catholic body are not justified in communicating with individuals, or even bodies of inferior authority, and therefore an Assembly of a similar nature and organisation is necessary to establish an intercourse of sentiment.... If a convention on the one part does not soon follow, and is not soon connected with that on the other, the common cause will split into the partial interest. For this reason, he called for a Protestant convention at Dungannon on 15 February 1793 as the Protestant counterpart of the Catholic convention.

19 The Drennan Letters, p.106.
20 Society of United Irishmen of Dublin (Dublin, 1794), p.44f..
21 Ibid., p.46f..
Drennan, seeing the Catholic question in terms of enfranchisement, merged it into the democratic cause of general enfranchisement. Unaware of the nature of the difference between Tone and himself, Drennan wrote to McTier that his address to the Volunteers of Ireland had received the thanks of all the corps in Dublin and expressed his apprehension that Belfast corps might be forced to “asunder from the rest of the north by its enemies”. He suggested to McTier to have a town-meeting of the corps in Belfast immediately, plainly but decidedly to resolve that reform was their sole business.

On the other hand, the editorial of the Northern Star on 12-15 December called out: “Reform! Substantial Reform! No Revolution!”. Afraid of the possible deviation of the United Irish movement due to Drennan’s address and to the news about French republic’s giving support to the Irish nation, the editorial said:

We have several times stated our sentiments to the public on the above subject -and it gives us some pain to find that there are some who misconceive them, and many who drive at a Revolution. We again say, there is no occasion for a Revolution.

The Dublin Society also reoriented their policy towards fundamental constitutionalism. On 25 January 1793, the Society published an address, To the Irish Nation. It declared:

If it be the principle of the Constitution, that it is the right of every commoner in this realm to have a vote in the election of his Representative; and without such vote, no man can be actually represented, it is our wish, in that case, to renovate that constitution, and to revive its suspended animation, by giving free motion and full play to its vital principle.

This shows a fundamental constitutionalist view. Moreover, a statement that “All Ireland knows and feels that the people are ousted from their own constitution ... the King must become a despot, and the Nation a slave” clearly reflects Burke’s radical comment that “Ireland was a state of civil servitude”, as mentioned in Chapter 6. However, the statement is followed by a proviso: “If, on the other hand, the constitution does not fully provide for an impartial and adequate representation of all the People ... if it be a monopoly, a privilege, or a prerogative; in that case is our desire to alter it”. This can be seen as a compromise between fundamental constitutionalism and classical republican democracy.

In the February quarterly elections, Simon Butler and Oliver Bond replaced Drennan and Rowan as chairman and secretary respectively. The new heads launched a campaign against the war with France and opposed the militia act and the Gun-powder act:

22 The Drennan Letters, [19 Dec. 1792], p.108f..  
23 N.S., 12-15 December 1792.  
25 Ibid., p.59.  
26 Ibid., p.58.
It appears to this Society, not only inexpedient, but an infatuation amounting almost to
madness, to subject Ireland, labouring under grievances hardly submitted to in time of peace,
to the invasion of men, who profess to carry along with them “not fire and sword but liberty”.

They further appealed to the parliamentary opposition to prevent Ireland from
“being involved in a war which must be ruinous to its commerce, and may
probably prove destructive either of its liberty or of its constitution”. Despite
their return to liberal constitutionalism, Butler and Bond were soon held in
detention in late February, and Beauchamp Bagenall Harvey and Thomas
Russell substituted for them. On 3 March, Harvey and Russell published
another address “To the People of Ireland”, which, basically following the Butler-
Bond line, called for mass-meetings, which was modeled on the town meeting in
Belfast. Unlike Drennan’s notion of mass-meeting composed of “citizen
soldiers”, the address sought the formation of communicative publicness in the
mode of mass-meetings: “if they approve it [i.e. the present situation], to testify
their approbation; if they condemn it, to express that condemnation”. In this
way, the Society got rid of the deviation and confusion which had occurred since
December.

Catholic leaders, however, were disappointed at the complacence of some
leaders of the Dublin Society at the crucial moment of the success in the
relaxation of the penal laws. Many Catholic members withdrew from the Dublin
Society of United Irishmen and those who favoured joining the political reform
movement had only a narrow win in the resolutions in the Catholic General
Committee meeting in April. Tone attributed the undesirable results not only to
secret manipulation of some Catholic leaders by the British government, but to
the imprudent conduct of Drennan and Rowan.

The abrupt emergence of Henry Sheares and Edward Lewins, who were
newcomers and who hitherto had little part in the Society’s activities, as
president and secretary respectively at the meeting the Dublin Society of
United Irishmen on 3 May 1793, may relate to new and more secret moves
within the United Irishmen. Although the small attendance, which Collins
portrayed as “a very thin meeting only 42 or 43 members present”, could be
seen as a result of withdrawal of the Catholic members, the question as to why
the two men were elected remains. Drennan, seeing Sheares only as “a fierce
republican”, commented that his presidency would not add much to the

27 Ibid., p.63.
28 Ibid., p.66.
29 Ibid., p.79.
30 For Tone’s accounts of the manipulation, see, Tone I, p.107f., p.248f.; for Tone’s
comment on the meeting of the Catholic General Committee, see, ibid., p.253-266.
31 McDowell, “Proceedings...”, p.76.
Society's popularity. However, Sheares may have assumed another mantle: part of his brief may have been to do the groundwork in preparing the base for French military aid. Only five days later, Eleazer Oswald, on a mission from Republican France, arrived in Dublin. Accompanied by Edward Fitzgerald, he exchanged views with Butler, Bond, Rowan, Reynolds, and Lewins. The fact that the details of the proposal by Fitzgerald and Rowan concur is significant. Fitzgerald had asked Paine in Paris in 1792 whether France could give financial aid to have 40,000 Volunteers kept in the field for three months for the liberation of Ireland. After meeting Oswald, Rowan’s version was that France offered a loan to maintain 40,000 Volunteers for four months. Lewins’s account of the mission is different. He mentioned “an offer of 20,000 men, arms, munitions and money from the Brissotin party”. As to the apparent conflict between Rowan and Lewins, Elliott judges that Rowan’s account is credible, for the reason that he actually met Oswald. Supposing Fitzgerald in November had given to Rowan information of prospective French aid for the existing Volunteers, the reason for Rowan’s pursuit of the scheme of the new Volunteer corps at that time would become clear. When Oswald reached Ireland after his protracted journey via Norway, the political condition in France had lost its rosy prospect: General Custine and the French army was heavily defeated on 28 March and retreated across the Rhine, and “in the east in early April France was open to the Austrian armies, and the rebellion of Vendee was expanding in the west”. Furthermore, the Girondin government was almost collapsing in May by the conflict with levelers in Paris. Russell’s journal of 4 April shows that he was aware of the decline in the power of the French army. Judging France as an unreliable support, he saw America as “the only asylum” if reform was out of the question. Lewins said later that the proposal “to help the Irish shake off the English yoke and to establish their independence” was rejected, because “Ireland was not then sufficiently prepared for such a revolution”. The Volunteer debacle - for debacle it was - may have also prompted the radicals to move from Volunteer activities --high profile in the tradition of the Volunteers-- into silently and secretly organising the United Irish societies or cells, north and south, on a new plan.

Although Tone was absent at the meeting where Lewins was elected to secretary, a conspiracy of silence may have existed between them. Just before Lewins became secretary, he gave a speech at the meeting of the Catholic

32 The Drennan Letters, [4 May 1793], p.160.
33 For Edward Fitzgerald’s scheme and Henry Sheares’s involvement in it, see, Elliott, Partners..., p.60, Wolfe Tone, p.224f..
34 Brendan Clifford, Belfast in the French Revolution (Belfast historical and educational association), 1989, p.89ff.
35 Elliott, Partners..., p.60f.; for Lewins’s account, see A.N. AF IV1671 plaq. I fos. 99-105; for Oswald’s one, see Corr. Pol. Ang. 587 fos. 167, 176.
General Committee. Tone had a high opinion of him: “A very sensible and spirited speech, against giving any degree of thanks [to Secretary Hobart], greater than the merits of Secretary Hobart”.  

Tone’s conduct between December 1792 and May 1793 shows that he planned to separate independence from reform and Catholic emancipation and he took different policies in accordance with the character of each campaign. He thought that reform and emancipation should be pursued by a popular national movement in a constitutional mode, because they were a matter of rights, which could rest on the liberal principles of the existing constitution; on the other hand, a breakaway from British influence was treasonable and a matter of power; therefore, it required high secrecy. Lewins, although he was a Catholic and had joined the united movement, had not played so prominent a role in the Catholic Committee; even after he became secretary he acted completely separately from the Catholic camp until the United Irishmen went underground in 1794. His speech in the Catholic meeting on 9 April 1795 shows that he saw the independence of Ireland as part of global liberation campaign of colonised nations against the British empire. 

His political views were the same as Tone’s; especially his view of the international situation was similar to that of the Northern Star. In the journal on 4 March 1798, Tone referred to Lewins: “he and I both done our best here, to serve the cause of liberty in Ireland”.  

The reason why Tone withdrew from the Dublin Society should be attributed more to his personal and official awkward position, than to his ill-feeling towards the radical demonstration of the Sheares, because, as mentioned above, the friction between Tone and some republican leaders of the Dublin Society had arisen before the Sheares took the lead. On 20 March, Tone and Russell were summoned to the Secret Committee of the House of Lords, which was set up on 11 February 1793 to examine the anti-government movements. This inquiry involved, as one of its objects of investigation, his letter to Russell of 1791, which referred to separation from England. Before and after the outbreak of war with France, the government, for fear of conspiracy between radicals and Republican France, attacked the leading activists: Rowan, Butler, Bond, and Tandy. This repression was one side of the carrot-and-stick diplomacy of the imperial administration, the other side was the legal rights extended to Catholics. In addition to this circumstantial reason, Tone’s departure from regular meetings of the Society may form some part of a wider design, and the close links with Belfast through Tone and Russell may point to the wider geographical links they cultivated. This corresponds also to the later presence  

37 A Full Correct Report of the Debates at the Catholic Meeting, on the 9th of April, 1795, p.32.  
38 Tone, *Life I*, p.470
of a reticent Neilson at some Dublin meetings and to the frictions with the Sheares, high-profile republicans whose prominence in office in the Society in mid-1793 and utterances contrasted with the low profile of Tone and Neilson and the less flamboyant one of Lewins.

7.2 The Extension of Civil Rights to Catholics and Consequent Discord

At first, after the 1793 Catholic act, Tone observed: “In what may be called the new theory of Irish politics, the first step in the system is ascertained, the remaining ones will follow in their order, if not instantaneously, yet certainly. A great difficulty has been surmounted”. This optimistic prospect should be considered as his momentary excitement caused by unexpected strong support for complete Catholic emancipation from the liberal Protestants MPs. His joyful feeling was however soon extinguished by Russell’s critical account on the new political situation. Russell noticed that his Presbyterian associates feared that the Catholics, satisfied with their restricted enfranchisement, might abandon the reform campaign.

This fear came true. Most Catholic leaders showed gratitude to the British government for reconciliation between Dublin Castle and themselves. Far from thinking of breakaway from the empire, some Catholics supported the war. Their attitude gave rise to discord among the Catholic members of the United Irishmen. Keogh, the most prominent figure among the Catholics, stood aloof from Tone and other radicals after the Catholic mission to London in January. Catholics in the Catholic Committee or in the United Irishmen were seen as anti-English republicans, as Captain Sweetman’s words at the meeting of the Society on 8 February suggested: “it had been asserted in and out of parliament that more than 2/3 of the Society were Roman Catholics as the whole of the Society has been represented as republicans and levelers”. Keogh, seeing Tone’s association with pro-French activists as disadvantageous and dangerous for the Catholics, tried to keep his distance from him. In this way, while Tone was kept in check by the Castle, blamed for the withdrawal of the Catholic members in the Dublin Society, and estranged from the Catholic sub-committee, there was no agent to pursue an agreement on complete independence from Britain either within the Catholic sub-committee or the Dublin United Irish Society.

On 4 April 1793, Russell, Neilson, McCormick and Tone met. It was on

30 Tone, “Reasons why the question of Parliamentary reform has always failed in the Irish legislature”, *Life* I, p.494. He emphasised that the success in the 1793 Catholic act was “the fruit of the union of Irishmen”.
this occasion that they gave shape to a new radical plan to pursue an anti-war campaign in response to the carrot-and-stick policy of the government. Russell wrote:

The spirit of the people is broken at present. The procrastination of the XX[Catholic] bill was a very wise measure of government. They waited for events and it answer’d. They had time to attack the spirited Protestants and that head of liberty -Belfast-. ... All the tyranny of government is establish’d by precedent and who will dare begin to resist it? Two wise patriots, Mr Hutton [i.e. Tone] and P.P. [i.e. Russell], foresaw this. ... What can put us up again? I see nothing but the continuance of the present ruinous war. Calamitous enough. 

Tone also made a similar comment on 27 March:

Sudden change of deputation, on our return from England. ... People then unanimous and spirited, but soon disheartened by this unaccountable conduct of their former leaders - Great advantages of the castle over us in negotiation. ... Probable consequences of any mishap befalling the English in the war - Ten thousand French would accomplish a separation. ... War unpopular here - trade, very bad.... Government apparently strong and people subdued; probably both fallacious - Accessions to people permanent, to Government but temporary. 

Although they confirmed their determination to put up a fight against the British empire, they were at a loss as to what to do for the moment in the fragmented movement. Between 10 and 19 May, it had been suggested that Tone go to France. He said to Russell that if the -- [the name was withheld] would be willing, he was willing to risk all he had to “go to an unanointed republic via London”. We cannot make out who had suggested his name and whose decision he intended to abide by. The conversation, however, coincided with Oswald’s visit to Dublin. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suppose that Tone and Russell were involved in conversations between the Irish radicals and the French Brissotin emissary. Although the difficult positions of both sides made Tone’s mission impossible, his determination to rise to the occasion suggests that a scheme of breakaway from the empire in alliance with France had take shape among the radicals at this stage.

There were three possible ways to form the base for the independence movement: one was through the existing societies of the United Irishmen, others were either by the formation of a new secret society or the transformation of the existing one. Since the organisation of the Belfast Societies had always been in a secret mode, in Dublin re-organisation within or under the umbrella of the Dublin Society was desirable. “In practice, however, it was not easy to pursue this course. The Sheares, for instance, very republican and hostile to the Rowan ascendancy in the Society, were equally anathema then and later to the Tone-Neilson interest. According to Russell’s

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"Ibid., p. 73f.
"Tone, Life I, p.107f.
"For the organisation of the Belfast societies, see, Nancy J. Curtin, The United Irishmen, p.98.
journal, Rowan suggested to him and Tone to form “a club to bring up the south to reform by writing and distribution” in December 1793. They mentioned its prospective members: McCormick, Reynoulds [sic], Thomas Addis Emmet, John Sweetman, Rowan, Russell, and Tone. Significantly, despite their prominence, the Sheares were not named. The role of Lewins in the Dublin Society is interesting. As mentioned above, he remained in the Society to organise the reform campaign in a constitutional and popular mood. When Emmet proposed that the Society should present their reform plan to the House of Commons on 8 March 1794, Lewins dismissed the idea as inefficacious. He did not oppose outright the constitutional way, but sought measures to “enable the people at large to carry the plan of reform into execution”. On 24 March, he moved to refer the matter of the measures to “the consideration of the committee of correspondence”, which consisted of seven members. Then, on the 29th, he brought forward his alternative plan of constitutional petition for reform and his proposal to set a the committee to consider the best way of petition to demonstrate “the power of the people”. Although the informer Collins supposed that his motion must have “met the approbation” of Keogh and Byrne and other leading members of the Catholics, Lewins’s contacts can be seen as being among the Belfast radicals and a small circle of Dublin United Irishmen. In terms of his connection with them, the following comments should not be overlooked:

as a great number of our members are now in the country, that they and their friends will have an opportunity of considering on the most effectual means of carrying whatever plan may be agreed to into execution; parliament is now prorogued, and when the power of parliament ceases the power of the people commences.

The actual number of attendees of the Dublin Society had fallen to around thirty at that time. He can be seen as referring to contacts and consultations beyond the formal meetings of the Society.

In the middle of 1794, the Dublin Society of the United Irishmen was still under the leadership of Butler, the Sheares, Emmet, Drennan. Divisions then became evident as efforts were made to re-organise it; many members gradually left; some prominent Catholics had few ties with it. However, one, Richard McCormick, was central to the new developments. McCormick had a close association with Tone and Russell, and like Tone formed part of the radical network with Northern ties. The tension between McCormick and some members of the Dublin Society dates back to the offence given by some members in the debate on parliamentary reform and to the friction between Butler and Neilson - an associate of McCormick - as to secrecy in the Society at

"Russell, Journals..., p.139.
"Ibid., p.119ff..
the meetings during the winter of 1794. When the parliamentary reform plan was finalised in the Society on 10 January 1794, the original plan proposed voice voting. James Reynolds, on behalf of the people of Ulster, moved to change it to ballot for the reason that “poor men then without injury to their families promise their landlords and yet serve their country by breaking their words”. This democratic claim, however, was opposed by the Dublin leaders, Emmet, the Sheares, Butler, and MacNally. On 1 February, Neilson, convinced of the existence of traitors inside the Dublin Society, proposed a new committee “to transact all the business of the Society”, and to summon only occasionally the Society itself to guard against the effect of treason” at the “very solemn crisis”. Butler, however, opposing him, declared that the meetings should be left open to the public, because the Society had agitated only what was perfectly constitutional. However, Russell’s journal in early 1794 notes that since 1793 a considerable number of people in the North had lined up behind a treasonable oath to rise in alliance with France if the reform by constitutional means was totally obstructed by the existing establishment.

Hence, alteration of the organisation to a secret one was indispensable not only in Belfast but in Dublin. The Belfast Society was ahead of the Dublin one in becoming secret. In January 1794, Drennan felt that the Belfast Society appeared extinct, and commented that it had “merely served as Catholic instruments”, and “served a turn”. A month later he again wrote: “I don’t understand Neilson’s system of eternal silence in Belfast and his expectations from it”. At this stage, Neilson was worried at the steps by government to clamp down on radical activists. For example, in the report on the arrest of William Jackson in May, the Northern Star initially judged him as an agent sent by the British government “with a view of entrapping such men as Mr Rowan”.

This also accounts for McCormick’s strong doubts about MacNally’s loyalty. The Dublin Society, however, admitted MacNally as a member of a inner committee. Drennan’s letter on 20 August said:

McCormick has not attended the Committee since MacNally was admitted. ... We admit Tone, Russell, etc., but it is probable they will never attend. ... Emmet told me that when he [i.e. McCormick] heard of MacNally’s admission he said he would never attend.

In July 1794, McCormick went on a tour through England. Drennan saw both his tour and the Catholic behavior at that moment as “curious”. Drennan heard that McCormick had been “not only in London but with some great men”

44 Ibid., p.104f.
50 Russell, Journals..., pp.141-146.
51 The Drennan Letters, p.181 (January 1794), p.188 (16 February).
52 N.S., 5 May 1794.
and came over "more democratized than ever". Furthermore, McCormick remained a member of the Society. His location in the spectrum of the internal politics of United Irishmen can be determined by the fact that he remained opposed to the re-admission of MacNally, which had been brought about by the favour of Drennan. There was a tussle between a McCormick and Drennan axis, which finally culminated in Drennan's severing his links with the Society as its new radical organisation took shape. McCormick formed a new club of Catholics to "revive their convention connection" at the same time. Drennan attributed this conduct to his dissatisfied bossy disposition, but the real reason cannot be seen as only personal. What was taking place was the collapse of the effort to revamp the old Society on the same lines as before, and the emergence, hesitantly or secretively, of a more secret organisation.

7.3 The Fitzwilliam Administration and the Reactivated Catholic Campaign

When Fox made a case against the war, linking it with the reform question in the British parliament in January of 1794, Drennan noticed its destructive effect on the empire, and said: "the question then will be not the improvement of the constitution but about the existence of the empire". Irish supporters of the anti-war campaign, stressing the great disadvantage of increased taxes to cover the rising war expenditure, represented the effects of war and taxation on trade as a proof of Ireland's subjection to the empire. Furthermore, they made common cause with British radicals against the existing monopoly of the empire, as a form of internal aristocracy and external colonialism.

In the autumn of 1794, the sought-for opportunity arrived. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Pitt was in difficulties over the war-budget. At that time, liberal radicals (fundamental constitutionalists) were involved with the anti-war propaganda through the Northern Star, and supported Fox, who opposed Pitt's war-policy in the British parliament. As to the actual condition of the war, the Northern Star commented:

Of all the mad projects that have ever entered into the head of a Minister, that of invading France with an handful of British troops, appears to be the most desperate and absurd. But this is now the only mode in which Great Britain can attempt to carry on the war; "the plan is confined to descents for the purpose of plunder and devastation on the coasts - a species of warfare from which nothing great, glorious, or decisive can be expected, and more becoming a colony of pirates, than a great commercial people."

Ibid., p.212
Ibid., p.182.
N.S., 29 Dec. 1794.
The radicals decided to resume a popular movement based on the Catholic sub-committee in December. McCormick put an advertisement in the *Dublin Evening Post* on 2 December 1794, which called the members of the late Catholic Committee to the anniversary dinner in commemoration of the Catholic Convention.

It was Russell who originally had an idea of the commemoration dinner. A year before, it was originally planned for reconciling a rift between Northern activists and some Dublin Catholic leaders: specifically, Neilson-McCormick versus Keogh. On 20 August 1793, Keogh and other members of the Catholic Committee held a banquet to express their gratitude to the Earl of Moira and other Protestant supporters of Catholic enfranchisement. However, they omitted to propose a toast to either the people of Belfast or the United Irishmen. Informed about this event, McCormick, Neilson and the Belfast activists were very offended, because they thought that Catholics attributed success in the enfranchisement campaign only to liberal Protestant politicians like Moira. Tone and Russell, having heard from McCormick of the ill-feeling of their Belfast associates, suggested to Keogh the idea of a dinner in commemoration of the 1793 petition to the king, in order to make up for their mistake. Keogh expressed enthusiasm for the plan, but the three men differed about the date proposed for the dinner, 2 January 1794, the anniversary of the day on which “the king received the petition”. Russell consulted McCormick and Thomas Ryan. McCormick peremptorily opposed dining on the day, which he saw as the day when “the cause of Ireland was lost in England by the delegates”. Ryan, expressing the same sentiments as McCormick, commented that he agreed on showing “the spirit” of the Catholics, but did “not like the day”. As a result, the plan was given up. Russell, more enthusiastic about the plan than Tone, and unsatisfied with this result, wrote that it “was a most unfortunate event, they should have another”. He stuck to it, because he feared that the leading body of Catholics, isolated from the emerging united liberation movement, would be open to the influence of the liberal Protestant MPs, unless the radical Catholics demonstrated a spirit of liberty. Seeing the political rifts among the Catholic leaders as going on “from bad to worse”, he persuaded them to take up the plan again, with a proposal to change the date.

The *Northern Star’s* account on the anniversary dinner in 1794 suggested that “[t]he idea had been long since taken up and spoken of - some Members of the late Committee having met”. McCormick, one of Russell’s closest associates, acted as secretary to put the plan into practice and held a

57 “McCormick to Tone”, *Life* I, p.274.
58 *Russell, Journals...*, p.140.
59 *N.S.*, 15 Dec.1794.
preliminary meeting. At first, the dinner was scheduled for 3 December 1794, but in the *Dublin Evening Post* on 4 December McCormick announced that it was put off to the 18th. Why was the schedule changed several times? The *Northern Star* on 15 December reported that serious conflict had arisen in the process of the preparation of the dinner at a preliminary meeting to make some necessary arrangements; some of the members agreed on “certain toasts appropriate to the occasion, and expressive of the principles of the Assembly” of 1792; others, although many of them “declared publicly they did not intend dining on that occasion ... peremptorily objected to one of the Toasts, relative to a Reform of the Commons”, and withdrew. Then, those who remained “appointed a committee of four to prepare the toasts and report”. Drennan later saw the objectors as influenced by Ponsonby, the Irish Whig leader. The committee of four summoned a second preliminary meeting. However, both parties clashed again, and the supporters of reform proposed that the decision-making on it should be put off to the dinner day, for the reason that the participants in the dinner should decide it. They intended to take advantage of the absence of those objectors who had declared that they would not attend the dinner. At the dinner, the proposal prepared by the committee of four was voted down by twenty-nine to twenty five. According to Drennan’s information, Keogh was absent ill, Byrne and Braughall were in the majority and McDonnell, Byrne’s political partner, in the chair did not vote. Then, the opponents of political reform moved that the two toasts about which difference of opinion had arisen: “the King and constitution” and “a reform in the Commons House of Parliament”, should not be proposed. The defeated radical minority, disgusted at the attitude of the majority, “conceiving that they could not with consistency remain in any company, public or private, where Parliamentary Reform, AS A TOAST, would be declined on any pretense whatsoever, retired to another room”. The *Northern Star* reported the toasts proposed by the radical minority, in which they saluted the Duke of Leinster, Grattan, Curran, and also Erskine, Fox, Sheridan, the gallant Kosciusko, and every constituent of Friend of Liberty. These names convey the same political tendency as the *Northern Star* itself. Moreover, the toasts expressed their gratitude to the people of Belfast. The editorial of the *Northern Star* applauded the conduct of the radical minority, and claimed that “a close and firm union among Irishmen themselves” would “promote the happiness of all persuasions much more than any consequences” which might “flow from a momentary fluctuation of party”. On the other hand, irritated at the majority’s desertion from the reform and total emancipation

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60 The Drennan Letters, p.218.
61 N.S., 15 Dec.1794.
campaign, it disapprovingly observed that “in proportion as they dabbled in the Castle politics, they were deluded -divided- and ‘betrayed’... their best and surest interests rests upon the affections of their northern countrymen, whose darling object is ‘reform’.

The radicals, who had withdrawn from the dinner, held a general meeting of Catholics of Dublin on 23 December, in which McCormick acted as secretary. This meeting and its resolutions were products of compromise between McCormick and Keogh on the principle of expediency. The participants resolved to petition the House of Commons for a total repeal of the penal and restrictive laws in the forthcoming session of the parliament, and appointed a committee of nine to prepare the petition: Byrne, McDonnell, Braughall, McNeven, John Sweetman, Hamill, McCormick, Keogh, and Thomas Ryan. This committee appealed to Catholics in other counties to prepare and transmit similar petitions, and publicly asked Grattan to present them to the House of Commons. Furthermore, they planned to present an address of congratulation to the new Lord Lieutenant Fitzwilliam. Compared with the toasts of the previous meeting, the resolutions were not comprehensive, but concentrated on the Catholic campaign.

This compromise was nothing more than a product of the “good” news brought by Grattan on 13 December. On his return from London, he made public the “full consent on the part of the British Cabinet, that remaining disabilities under which Roman Catholics labour, shall be done away”. This occasion gave a new importance to Keogh, who had a working connection with Grattan -an Irish associate of Portland-, and Burke -a leading Portland Whig-, as well as being a rich retired Catholic businessmen. Emmet later wrote that Grattan “communicated so early as 15th of December to some of the most active members of the late catholic committee”. Emmet had no close contact with Catholic leaders at that time. Hence, his account should be seen as an unreliable source of information. Moreover, the phrase “some of the most active members” should be understood to refer not to the Catholic radicals at large but more specifically to Keogh and his old associates since 1790. As Thomas Bartlett, modern historian, mentions, “Grattan almost certainly gave Keogh and Byrne to understand that Emancipation was on the cards, and he urged them to organise petitions”.

On the other hand, McCormick, a year before when the radicals talked of the setting up of a new club in the South, had declared that he would not consort

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64 Thomas Addis Emmet, Towards the History of Ireland, p.80.
with Keogh, because he was a traitor. He always criticised Keogh's reliance on British influence on the Catholic question. Tone later wrote that he started working again as a secretary at Christmas of 1794. Behind the official secretary McCormick, he acted as a shadow one. It is notable that one of the resolutions at the general meeting paid a special tribute to Edward Byrne. This resolution and his chairmanship can be seen as the steps which Tone and McCormick took to check the revival of Keogh's supremacy. The proposal of a nation-wide petition to the Commons, although suggested by Grattan, was acceptable to the radicals, because it was consistent enough with their principle that the nation should be liberated by the Irish nation themselves. In reality, the apparent large possibility of total emancipation ensured a country-wide response. An enormous number of petitions from almost every county were presented to the House of Commons in February 1795. A flood of petitions filling the floor of the House of Commons put considerable pressure on the government. This result means a victory of the radicals in terms of aggrandizement of popular power.

However, from another angle, the radicals lost ground. As mentioned in Chapter 5, a back-up outside Parliament to Duquery's anti-war cause in parliament was lost sight of. Popular discontent with the increasing taxes entailed by the imperial war was to have served as a stimulus to separation from the empire. However, despite the fact that Foxite Whigs and the British radicals cooperated on the anti-war campaign in and out of Parliament, and that the Irish radicals, according to the *Northern Star*, initially intended to take the same line at the outset in early December, the new developments on the Catholic question overshadowed it in Ireland.

Radical Catholics, seeing Fitzwilliam's lieutenancy as a result of Pitt's wartime politics, did toast Fox and Sheridan, leading anti-war Whigs, at the preliminary meeting. However, this was inconsistent with the welcoming attitude towards Fitzwilliam in the resolutions of the meeting on the 23rd, and their compromise with Keogh, a puppet of Grattan, himself a supporter of Fitzwilliam on the bandwagon of the new British coalition, effectively narrowed their range of actions. Grattan and Ponsonby supported the continuation of the war in the parliamentary debate though it was at the expense of the living standards of the masses. Emmet later summarised the dilemma of the radicals:

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56 "Tone to Arthur O'Connor on 20 October 1795", Life I, p.287.
57 Duquery's parliamentary speech was published as a pamphlet: *The Speech of Henry Duquery, Esq. in the House of Commons of Ireland, on Thursday 22nd January 1795 on the address to the king on proposing an amendment to entreat his majesty not to refuse entering into a negotiation with the present government of France, for the attainment of peace* (Dublin, 1795).
These men [i.e. the determined republicans and members of the new organisation] also deemed the administration itself eminently suspicious; because it designed as they alleged, by the popularity of partial measures, to turn public attention from more real grievances, and to excite if possible, a general approbation of the war with France.  

7.4 Towards Separation from the British Empire

Fitzwilliam’s abrupt dismissal by the British government in late February, however, gave the radicals an unexpected opportunity to direct the campaign towards separation from Britain and abolition of domestic monopoly. The events were proof of Tone’s theory that ultimately domestic monopoly was supported by British influence. The dismissal resulted in the reversion to the old establishment. A situation, in which the claim for the necessity of separation from the empire, could be expected with some prospect of success, came out at last.

Tone publicly began to act as a secretary in the Catholic movement in February 1795. Two days after the probable dismissal of the Lord Lieutenant became a matter of public knowledge, the Dublin Catholics met at Francis Street chapel on 27 February. The meeting resolved to present an address to the King in order to appeal to him to rely on their loyalty as his royal subjects. It delegated Keogh, Byrne and Baron Hussey as a mission and appointed Tone as secretary. The very quick reaction of the Dublin Catholics to the recall was due to Keogh’s close contact with Grattan. The day before, Keogh and Byrne were informed by Grattan that “the Catholic bill was to be resisted and the old Government restored”, and advised them to call upon the gentlemen in the English Cabinet, “to return them thanks for their support, and to hear them declare their sentiments”. On the same day, Tone, Keogh, M.M. [sic] Byrne, Thomas Ryan, John Sweetman and Braughall had a meeting, and agreed to follow Grattan’s advice. McCormick withdrew from this plan, because his classical republican principle was totally inconsistent with it. When the rift between McCormick and Keogh recurred, no one but Tone was able to mediate between them. At that time, Tone, long known to have been involved in the Jackson affair, had been labeled as a pro-French person by Dublin Castle. Hence, it seemed somewhat odd even in the eyes of contemporaries for him to arrange the mission to the king. Drennan, wondering that it was “impolitic” to send on the mission the man who was “if prosecuted in danger of his life for high

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69 Thomas Addis Emmet, ibid., p.82.
70 Drennan mentioned the serious friction between Fitzwilliam and the British Administration, and the Dublin Catholics’ planning of their own meeting, on 25 February, see, The Drennan Letters, p.223; the news of the dismissal appeared in the Irish press on 28 February, see, D.E.P. and F.J. on the same day.
71 Tone, “Memorandum on 26 February 1795”, Life I, p.280.
treason”, supposed that “it was done to have a watch and check upon Keogh”. It was indeed unwise in terms of the reaction of the British government, but the Catholic leaders of Dublin had no choice in the matter. On the other hand, Tone himself was ready to play the delicate role, foreseeing that the failure of their negotiation would convince the Catholic leaders of the unreliability of the British government and Portland Whigs. Without becoming wholly absorbed in the business of the mission, he kept his own course. While the delegation were in London in the middle of March, he made contact with his radical associates there. One of them was Hugh Bell, an Irish wine merchant, a friend of John Russell -Thomas Russell’s brother-, and also a friend of Sir Francis Burdett, who was a prominent British radical and a very close friend of Arthur O’Connor.

Beside the presentation of the address to the king at a levee on 13 March, the delegates appealed to Burke to persuade the members of the Cabinet to reconsider the question of an interview with Portland, the secretary of state, to inform them of the king’s answer to their address. However, the only reply was to the effect that the Lord Lieutenant, Irish deputy of the king of the British empire, was the sole proper channel to inform Ireland about the king’s will. In theoretical terms, this was a counterattack by the Castle party and their friends against a radical construction of the Irish constitution. As mentioned in Chapter 6, Tone, assuming the existence of a king of “Ireland”, had petitioned the “Irish” king for the civil rights of Catholics as his royal subjects. What that would entail would be more pulling into practice an idealised British constitution than calling for restoration and reform, because such a constitution had never existed in Ireland. The notion of independence of the Crown of Ireland had become so widespread since the regency crisis, that even Dublin Corporation, a strong supporter of the Protestant constitution, unwittingly “counterpetitioned the King”. The British administration, by dismissing the immediate link between the king and Ireland as unconstitutional, declared that there was no independent King of Ireland, and that only the Lord Lieutenant as a plenipotentiary deputy of the king of Britain had a sovereignty over Ireland. This reaffirmation of constitutional links between Dublin executive and London was a reversion to the 1782 system, which Tone and O’Connor had bitterly criticised.

In this way, political reform which Tone had pursued to the limit, was brought to a dead end by the civilian “coup d’etat” in the post-Fitzwilliam Dublin Castle. Political reform and independence of Ireland now turned from the

72 The Drennan Letters, p.227.
73 Elliott, Wolfe Tone... , p.450; TCD, MS873/330, Tone to John Russell, 13 June 1795.
74 A full correct report of the debates at the Catholic meeting on the 9th of April, 1795 (Dublin. 1795), p.3.
75 The Drennan Letters, p.226.
matter of rights to that of power. Liberal radicals (fundamental constitutionalists) judged that there was no choice but resort to force in order to remove the domestic monopoly of the Castle aristocrats and the influence of the empire. However, even at this stage, there were significant differences of understanding as to what lines the movement should go along among liberal radicals (Tone-Neilson circle), the Catholic reformists and republicans. The radicals, finding the influence of Britain as the root of the Castle power, were to pursue separation from the empire. Hence, they needed to secure a foreign military alliance to give weight to threats against the British imperial force, and to put aside internal class differences, for the sake of a union of the nation. On the other hand, republicans, seeing the domestic monopoly of Castle and Castle-managed parliament as an aristocracy of the ancien régime, sought to lead people towards the abolishment of the old establishment. The leading Dublin United Irishmen wanted to pull down the aristocracy, rather than expel all British influence, hence, while they also valued French alliance, it was in a spirit of some distrust or caution. For instance, Emmet had seen the Fitzwilliam administration as a “fallacy of ill-founded political hopes”. Drennan viewed its collapse as “changes in the upper aristocracy” caused by a power struggle between the Beresfords and the Grattanite opposition. While Tone sought to make capital from the affair as a opportunity to lead the nation towards the separation from the empire, Drennan felt that the Dublin Society should look at it with dignified indifference at the affair, because the Society was “destined for national objects alone”. He was not imbued with the belief of others that the power struggle among Irish aristocrats itself had been occasioned and manipulated by the influence of the British government.

Furthermore, another kind of republicanism, with millenarian and levellerist tendency, was to spread among the lower classes in the North. Modern historians have studied this sort of republicanism in terms of its religious elements, and stressed its sectarian or other elements, in terms of modern class struggle in particular, emphasising linen weavers’ role as bearers of republicanism. Some property owners feared that this agrarian republicanism, not only that of Presbyterians but of Catholics -the Defenders-, would lead to the violation of private property. Laurence Parsons had published his tract Thoughts on Liberty and Equality in 1793 to warn of the dangers of an agrarian levellerist republicanism based on a egalitarian understanding of Paine. Moreover, Thomas Elrington’s pamphlet entitled Thoughts on the Principles of Civil Government and their Foundation in the Law of Nature, referring to

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76 Emmet, ibid., p.91.
77 The Drennan Letters, p.225.
78 Laurence Parsons, Thought on Liberty and Equality (Dublin, 1793).
Locke's principle of "property being to be represented in parliament", denounced the democratic principles of France as exceeding "the most liberal theory". These two pamphlets show a fear of an undercurrent of democracy in the lower classes infringing the liberal principles of the constitution. Russell's political view originally embraced this millenarian levellerist element, and unlike Tone, was not purely fundamental constitutionalist. In this way, while the agitation against the old establishment stimulated the political energy of the lower classes, it made some in the middle class fearful of the process of political separation. They tended to take the line of Grattan, who went on protesting against British government's policy by means of parliamentary oratory and his connection with Portland Whigs, sticking to the assumption that Ireland was constitutionally an independent kingdom (a concept which Tone had adopted for the justification of rights of the nation, but dismissed as inefficacious to advance the reality of freedom). Drennan, observing of this political tide that "all this is a mixture of party with patriotism, it is Grattanism rather than civism", commented that it would "serve some end". After Tone left Ireland, nobody among the leaders of the United Irishmen could act as a mediator between radicals, republicans and Grattanites.

While the opposition immediately after the dismissal of Fitzwilliam was full of patriotic indignation against the British government, many MPs supported the change. Although Elliott sees the Catholic meeting on 9 April as a declaration of "the long-awaited merger of the Catholics with the United Irishmen", the actual proceedings were less separatist or republican than Grattanite. Keogh claimed that the conduct of the British government was an barefaced and avowed interference "in the affairs of a country, said to be independent". However, although referring to the cases of America and Brabant, and warning the British government that its contempt for the Irish nation might lead them to resort to force and result in separation from the empire, he declared that he wished the Catholics to go on pursuing "constitutional redress" as they had been doing.

Thomas Ryan, an associate of the Tone-McCormick radical circle, sought to turn Catholics' attention from their own emancipation to building up a firm

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81 The *Drennan Letters*, p.225.

82 Elliott, *Wolfe Tone*, p.249.

83 *A Full Correct Report of the Debates at the Catholic Meeting Held in Francis-street, on the 9th of April* (Dublin, 1795), p.6, p.10.
union with other sects. He pointed out that the contemptuous conduct of the British ministers showed that the real union between Protestants and Catholics had not been accomplished yet, and appealed to the audience not to be led into acts of intemperance, lest any foreign alliance with an impaired national consensus would break the independence of the nation. “If it was thought that Protestants were disposed to come forward so very generally ... in favour of Catholics, the nobleman [i.e. Fitzwilliam] ... would not have been recalled”. He suggested that Catholics should abandon the concept of relief by parliamentary bill and take up other questions “in conjunction with” Protestant fellow-subjects “in order to lay the foundation of good understanding and a cordial alliance”, with the intent of leading people towards reform. His speech, in spite of prudence in its appearances, presented radical principles. He tried to transform the Catholic question into a reform question, that is to say, a claim of general enfranchisement and fair representation. As to those who stuck by the existing establishment, he remarked that “as they had little to gain, and much to lose by a departure from rigid and lofty maxims, they made their stand behind prescription and precedent, and declaimed against innovation, not only in ecclesiastical, but also in civil concerns”, while those who had not “the benefit of prescription and usage in their favour” “appealed to the immutable principles of natural justice, and the original rights of human nature”. Furthermore, claiming that only national consensus justified revolution, he said that the nation struggling for liberty with the arms of reason was no more criminal than the people of England at the English Revolution, which was an actual rebellion in terms of its proceedings. 84

William James McNeven, who had became deeply involved with the Dublin United Irishmen since 1794, agreeing with Ryan in domestic policy, claimed that in “relinquishing a minor consideration” [i.e. the Catholic bill], Catholics should meet their Protestant fellow-citizens “in pursuit of a still more momentous object” --a “Radical Reform’ in the House of Commons”, which would free the country. Seeing the moment of England’s calamity as the season of their success, he proposed to immediately petition the Commons for reform. At that point, he judged the British government still negotiable, for the reason that its “calculating” disposition would “balance the difference” between the good-will and the resentment of Irish people, so that he appealed to people of all sects to concentrate their power on the reform campaign. 85 These two men’s speeches reveal an intention to re-orient the movement, hitherto manipulated by the Grattan-Keogh clique.

On the other hand, Lewins, who appeared on the stage of the Catholic

84 Ibid., pp.18-26.
85 Ibid., pp.12-17.
movement for the first and last time, referring to the unexpected difficulties Pitt was confronting within the empire itself, encouraged the audience to resist Pitt's imperial policy. Although he did not assert separation from the empire, he warned of the disadvantage and danger of the involvement of Ireland in the misfortune of the empire:

During these four years past, other nations in Europe have been agitated and convulsed - Kings have bled and thrones have disappeared! we remained quiet; but it should seem as if we were no longer to be privileged; as if we could no longer count upon an exemption from the scourge that is abroad; but that we too were to be visited in our turn, and that the hour of visitation was at hand.  

Although Edmund Burke described the meeting as "wholly jacobinical", only the few speakers quoted above attempted to orient the Catholic populace towards the united national movement for general enfranchisement and parliamentary reform.  While Tone and his associates determined to prepare for separation, the radical speakers took a moderate line on the popular movement. This difference of emphasis of itself did not create a rift between them. Although Tone did not see a petition as an effective measure to break down the established system, he saw it as useful evidence of national consensus, which would justify resorting to force and alliance with France. As Ryan referred to the precedent of the English Revolution of 1688, which was seen as a rebellion in alliance with the Dutch navy, Tone also took the precedent to justify the introduction of a foreign army. He wrote: "Introducing a foreign army, is a sounding phrase, and very alarming to many; but I doubt whether the end may not justify even that measure, in certain cases of the last extremity".  While Tone and his radical associates never regarded parliamentary measures efficacious for total liberation of the nation, they never renounced them. The same policy can be found in O'Connor's candidacy for Antrim (and Fitzgerald's mooted in County Down) for the 1797 election. Improbable though they may seem, they could conceivably have had widespread repercussion as Mrs. McTier observed. 

The actual proceedings of the meeting in April 1795 were less jacobinical than Grattanite. Most speakers, offended by the scheme for the total emancipation of Catholics at the price of a union of the two kingdoms (revealed in a letter attributed to Fitzwilliam), and with the contemptuous conduct of the British government in the Fitzwilliam affair, expressed their patriotic sentiments against union, in the belief that their actual state was independent. Furthermore, the resolutions did not take up the petition of "the radical reform".

86 Ibid., pp.29-33.
87 Burke Correspondence, VII, p.245.
88 "Tone to Arthur O'Connor, 20 October 1795", Life I, p.286.
89 The Drennan Letters, p.247, p.249.
In reality, the radical line was lost in waves of rhetoric and simple patriotic aspiration. The meeting shows the predominance of the Grattan-Keogh clique. After that, Keogh was again to petition the king for “the final emancipation”, supported by Grattan and John Philpot Curran.

Facing the ineffective Grattanite line, O'Connor in his speech on 4 May 1795 pointed out the connection between the domestic monopoly of a few families based on rotten boroughs and British domination, as Tone had already realised. Seeing the national independence of the 1782 constitution as destroyed by “the bribery of a British Minister, he declared that nothing was to be reaped from the English connection, which was "not more galling to their feelings than restrictive" of the prosperity of Ireland; therefore, it was human nature that people were driven to “court the alliance of any nation able and willing to break the chains of a bondage”. His speech represented an unexpected support of great magnitude for the radicals.

The spring of 1795 was a significant turning point. Those against the Castle monopoly were to divide over the question of breaking away from the British empire, so that a political panorama towards 1798 was composed of three elements: conservative Protestant constitutionalism, imperialistic liberal constitutionalism (Grattanites) and anti-imperialistic radicalism. The United Irishmen sought total reform of the election system on the basis of general enfranchisement. This was too sweeping a demand for Grattanites. Robert Simms, one of the Northern associates of Tone, wrote to Tone 12 July 1795: “they are not yet able to swallow such a pill, but still they continue the intercourse”. Moreover, radicals and Grattanites differed about the question as to the real roots of political evil: was it the Castle or the empire? Curran’s letter to Burke, declaring that the Castle was their inner enemy, appealed to him and the Portland Whigs to line up against it: “Her [Ireland’s] weakness was in her representation - her danger in the utter want of all responsible government”. In this case, reformers had no choice but to depend on the unconstitutional influence of the British politicians, to remove the Castle party. Despite Grattanite claims of independence and “general weal and union of the

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[Speech of Arthur O’Connor... on the Catholic Bill, p.26.]

[The class division among Catholics was encouraged by malicious propaganda by supporters of the establishment. For instance, an anonymous pamphlet A Letter to John Keogh, Esq. on the Subject of a late Meeting by a Roman Catholic, Dublin, 4 May 1795, declared: “all your [i.e. Keogh’s] endeavours as this day, have been to gratify the ambition of a few individuals, who, being men of property, must, beyond a doubt, be the only people who would benefit by the emancipation, if it took place”. (p.5) However, warning the lower class masses that "by the aid a deluded and misled people, a few rapacious individuals have obtained their aim in France", it in effect persuaded them to “remain quiet”. (p.7; p.12)

[“R.S. to Tone, Belfast 12 July 1795”, Life I, p.284.]

[John Curran, A letter to the Right Honorable Edmund Burke, on the Present State of Ireland (Dublin, 1795), p.15-17.]
British empire”, their policy left Ireland in subjugation. 94 On the other hand, in its new 1795 constitution the United Irishmen aimed “to obtain a complete reform in the legislature, founded on the principles of civil, political, and religious liberty”. 95 The United Irishmen sought the establishment of a democratic representative system, a course of action which presumed confrontation with Britain, because the corrupted domestic system itself was an indispensable part of the imperial power. However, getting widespread support for this, even in the North, was far from easy, as Robert Simms wrote to Tone in September:

The organisation ... which will certainly produce powerful means, if properly applied, but it will require great exertions to keep this organisation from producing feuds among the different sects; for the Presbyterians in general knowing nothing of their views and plans, look on them with jealousy. 96

This account reveals the ideological weakness of the organisation.

After Tone left, the movement stood in need of a forceful figure who had insight. Tone penned a letter to O’Connor from Philadelphia on 20 October, which for some reason he did not send. Why did Tone write to a man whom he had not met? As he himself mentioned, the initial purpose of the letter was to explain to O’Connor the circumstances of his withdrawal from the Catholic Committee for fear that O’Connor might misunderstand his position which was distorted in a debate attended by O’Connor in the Common Council of Cork. However, most of the letter concerned Tone’s view on the actual state of Ireland and his justification of the scheme to introduce a foreign army. He did not know that O’Connor had been an associate of the British radical circle. “Judging from the speech which has immortalised you”, he wrote to O’Connor, “I am satisfied we are agreed as to the grievances of Ireland”. However, thinking that they might “differ as to the mode of redressing them”, because O’Connor referred to William Jackson as a traitor in his parliamentary speech, he tried to convince him of his plan for the breakaway from the empire. Furthermore, anxious about the actual state of Ireland, he observed: “any man wishing to argue for her [Ireland’s] just rights is constrained to keep the strength of his case as much out of sight as possible, and to scout and skirmish about the outposts, instead of storming the enemy in the citadel”. 97 This comment conveys Tone’s awareness of the need of a mediator, who could iron out small differences among sects to unite people against the British empire. The letter can be seen as intended to sound out O’Connor about his willingness for the part.

It was “liberal radicalism” which led the two men to almost the same view. As argued in Chapters 5 and 6, the concept of “liberal radicalism” has two

94 Ibid., p.50.
95 Emmet, ibid., p.101.
96 “R.S. to Tone, Belfast 18 September 1795”, Life I, p.284.
sources: one Humean liberal constitutionalism; the other Smithian political economy. In their arguments, Tone and O’Connor often criticised the actual constitutional system by contrasting it with the liberal principles which they saw in the British constitution. It was Humean philosophy which enabled them find those principles in the British constitution. Hence, the political aspect of liberal radicalism can be called fundamental constitutionalism. Smithian political economy contributed to the anti-imperialist element in liberal radicalism. In this way, the native liberal radicalism served as the principles for the formation of a united movement of the nation. Put into shape by Tone, it was further pursued by O’Connor. In terms of the formation of this radical current, Neilson and Sampson’s role should not be overlooked. The editorials in the *Northern Star* and its coverage show that they as well as Tone and O’Connor followed the ideal of Brissotin internationalism. In this sense, it is not surprising that after Tone left, Neilson and Sampson became close to O’Connor, and their axis was to clash with a Dublin-based group, as Cullen points out. Unlike the “republican-enthusiasm” of some Dublin United Irishmen, liberal radicalism should not be seen as an imported epidemic like “Franco-philia” or “French disease”. It was a native one shaped by efforts to analyse the actual condition of their own land and also by struggle against the exploitative power. If liberal radicalism owed something to revolutionary France, it was less to republicanism than to the ideal of Brissotin internationalism. When we discern this radicalism in the Irish popular movement in the 1790s, it is entirely fair to conclude that Ireland positively contributed to the first wave of modern democracy movement.

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Chapter 8:
O'CONNOR'S STRATEGY FOR LIBERATION AND MODERNISATION OF THE IRISH NATION: HIS POLITICAL AND SOCIAL THOUGHT 1790-96

Let me conjure you to consider, that you are no longer legislating for the barbarous ignorant ages which are gone by, but that you must now legislate for the more enlightened and more intelligent age in which you live, and for the still more enlightened ages which are to come.

Arthur O'Connor

8.0 Uniqueness of O'Connor

Unlike Tone, O'Connor's approach to the united Irish movement derived from his unique theoretical view of modern society. His ultimate purpose was the establishment in Ireland of a civil and commercial society, which, in his view, had been obstructed artificially by the policy of the British administration. While development-centric imperialist politicians saw British influence as an indispensable condition of civilisation in Ireland, he dismissed it as a systematic "drain" of national resources to Britain, and became convinced that the exploitative system would be undermined by the establishment of a national government, the annihilation of factions and their usurpations, and the abolition of religious distinctions. Despite the difference in long-term perspective, these three heads were almost the same as Tone's national independence, parliamentary reform and emancipation of the Catholics. As his disappointment with the parliamentary opposition led Tone to recognise administration and opposition alike as the Protestant "aristocracy", O'Connor as well, after he had a seat in Parliament in 1790, came to regard the aristocracy as supporting exploitation by Britain.

O'Connor, as an individual politician, backed parliamentary reform as early as 1791 with his attack on the aristocratic opposition. While on the administration side till 1795, his parliamentary speeches between 1790 and 1795, show that he did so attacking the weakness of the policy of the opposition, from the perspective of his interest in economic improvement, rather than by way of support for the administration. Looking back on those days, he said: "I accepted a seat from my uncle Lord Longueville, in the chimerical hope that this crash [sic] between the factions and the Government might be improved to the advantage of Ireland". This passage conveys a characteristic view of Humean constitutionalism, which saw the constitution as a machinery of various powers colliding with one another, and accounts for his independence from both sides in

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2 The second Address to the free electors of the County of Antrim (Belfast, 1797).
3 Ibid.
Parliament. His political conduct was basically regulated by his judgment as to what the historical progress of society required at each moment. Hence, without understanding his social and historical view, we would fail to see the consistency of his policy and, as other studies have done, would underestimate him. In this chapter, I shall show how his commercial republicanism was formed.

8.1 Towards the Progress of Civil Society: O'Connor's Liberal Materialism 1790-1794

When O'Connor entered politics, he saw the recurrent clashes between the government and the opposition in terms of a desirable emulation between the monarchical element of the constitution and the aristocratic one. If the three elements of the constitution, the monarchical, the aristocratic, and the commonalty, worked regularly, in his view, the battle between the first two should lead to beneficial results, because their rivalry, trying to discredit each other with the people, would check the power of both, and people would “find it easy to control” them “within constitutional bounds”. 4 Adopting Humean constitutionalism, which Duncan Forbes terms scientific Whiggism in contrast with vulgar Whiggism, O'Connor attacked Grattan, who argued for the pension bill proposed by the opposition, in March 1791. 5 Although historians like Frank MacDermot have commented that “his early record in parliament indicates conventional support of the administration”, his argument against the pension bill cannot be seen as simply “conventional” or for the administration. Rather, his “scientific” Whiggish objection, similar to Hume’s in his essay “Of the independency of Parliament”, contrasted with Grattan’s “vulgar” Whiggish opposition view on political corruption.

4 O’Connor’s speech on 19 March, 1791, P.R., XI(1791), p.350f..

5 According to Duncan Forbes, “it was the essence of ‘vulgar’ Whiggism that the difference between free and absolute government was not one of degree, but of kind, an absolute qualitative difference, ... which made any science of comparative politics or comparative study of constitutions impossible”. Especially, the conception of liberty in vulgar Whiggism, which means government by laws to which people consented, is problematic, because “[t]he assumption behind this monolithic conception of liberty is that liberty of any sort in civil society is impossible unless all the people share in the making of laws and give their consent freely: that is why the French and the subjects of absolute government are ‘slaves’ and their governments ‘tyrannical’”. (Forbes, Hume’s Philosophical Politics, Cambridge UP, 1975, p. 142). Hume re-defined the conception of liberty: “the personal liberty and security of individuals guaranteed by law, equivalent to justice, peace, order, protection of property, the sanctity of contracts. In so far as ‘liberty’ is for Hume the object of government, it means this; any other, more political, sort of liberty being a means to this end” (Forbes, “Sceptical Whiggism, Commerce, and Liberty”, in A. Skinner and T. Wilson (eds.) Essays on Adam Smith, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975, p.184). Then, Hume “viewed the British Constitution with scientific detachment” in terms of a system of liberty and of its effects on civilisation (Hume’s Philosophical Politics, p.186f.). By the term “Humean politics” I mean this kind of scientific approach to the British Constitution.
Hume argued that the British constitutional system, after the English Revolution, allotted to the Commons so great a share of power, that “it absolutely commands all the other parts of the government”; although “the king has a negative in framing laws”, his “legislative power is plainly no proper check” to that of the Commons. Moreover, although “the principal weight of the crown lies in the executive power”, the power is checked by the legislative power, because the Commons had the sole right of granting the money which the exercise of the executive power required; hence, under this legislative ascendancy, the influence of the administration on parliament by pensions and places was a requisite function to secure the independence of the executive and maintain political stability. Implicitly criticising country Whigs, he observed: We may, therefore, give to this influence what name we please; we may call it by the invidious appellations of corruption and dependence; but some degree and some kind of it are inseparable from the very nature of the constitution, and necessary to the preservation of our mixed government. 8

The country Whigs conceived that patronage and influence were “moral” problems to be condemned as corruption and led to infringement by the crown and administration of the supremacy of parliament established by the English Revolution. They advocated a genuine 1688 system to secure parliamentary supremacy from the unconstitutional influence of the crown and administration. Seeing a danger in their claim, Hume thought that they confused the notion of parliament in the British limited monarchy with that of assembly in a pure republic. By his objective analysis of the machinery of power in the limited monarchical system, Hume claimed that patronage and influence had worked as a function of the executive to check the legislative rather than infringed the independence of parliament, and that they were indispensable supplements to sustain the actual system, in which the executive power, granted to the crown and administration, could only match the constitutionally predominant legislative power of the parliament by means which were not provided for constitutionally. Then, he pointed out a contradiction in the country Whigs’ claim. He suggested that if the country Whigs really sought to abolish patronage and influence, they should simultaneously advocate changing the actual mixed form of government (the limited monarchy) to a republican one to maintain checks and balances under the supremacy of the parliament, because he thought that the supremacy of assembly or parliament can be sustained only by pure republican systems, where “the power is distributed among several assemblies or senates” and “the checks and controuls are more regular in their operation”. Unlike the assemblies of a republican system, the actual parliament was granted only the legislative power and needed to be checked by


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other equivalent power.

Although Hume approved the influence of the crown and administration, his position should not be identified with the court Whigs' argument that patronage and influence was necessary for the administration to execute its policy firmly and efficiently. Hume's approbation of them was in terms of expediency, and of checks and balances of power in the actual constitution. In order to distinguish the Humean way of thinking both from that of the country party and the court party, Duncan Forbes, as stated above, called the former the scientific Whigs, the latter (especially the country Whig) the vulgar Whigs.  

O'Connor employed the same argument as Hume in his speech in March 1791. Speaking just ahead of him, Grattan, supporting the pension bill, claimed that if the bill was passed, the pension list would be reduced from 105,000l to 80,000l; accordingly, 25,000l would be saved to "the nation". His patriotic eloquence portrayed such a small quantitative change as if it was a successful defence of national wealth from the Crown and ministers, which in his vision he saw as the authority of Britain. Attempting to stir up the patriotic sentiments of MPs, he said that 

if the bill were passed, ... you could prevent him [i.e. the Minister] from bestowing the public treasure ... upon men who have deserved nothing from Ireland, and who, had they remained in their own country must have remained obscure, if they had remained honest; you would prevent him from robbing the country with the hand of rapine, and ruling it with the iron hand of oppression; you would prevent him from plundering the country, and ruling it by its own money.  

O'Connor understood the actual state in a different way. He saw the influence of the crown and minister as the monarchical element and executive branch of the constitution, rather than as an external foreign power. His speech briefly dwelt on the constitutional history in Ireland. It said that indeed the British constitution had been transplanted into Ireland, but the mixed government, which the constitution would have required, had not been formed; the government had been virtually aristocratic until the Lord Lieutenant began to reside in Ireland; during the aristocratic period, Ireland had witnessed the worst government in the annals of the world and unparalleled melancholy consequences; however, since the arrival of Lord Townshend, first resident Lord Lieutenant, the monarchical branch had struggled "for the exercise of its executive authority", colliding with the aristocratic power, which strove to regain the power it used to have. O'Connor saw the actual situation as the mid-stage of formation of a real mixed government. Hence, he said: "I appeal to this House, and to the Irish nation, whether this is a time to diminish the influence of

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8 *P.R.*, XI(1791), p.350
the Crown in its present struggle?"  

Furthermore, O'Connor argued against the bill on the grounds of efficacy to attain its declared purpose. If the bill was intended to exclude the influence of the crown and ministers, or otherwise abolish corruption, the quantitative change to the pension list proposed by its bill was too insignificant to accomplish its real aim. Then, he further discussed the issue in terms of the preservation of the actual constitutional monarchy. He declared that the bill was "a species of self-denying ordinance", which would amount to "the abolition of monarchy, and to the substitution of artful designing men to exercise the executive power with all or more than the despotism they affect to abolish". This comment reveals a typical Humean view. It meant that if the opposition like Grattan intended to maintain the present system in accordance with the principles of checks and balances the limited monarchical constitution entailed, their denial of the patronage and influence of the crown and ministers would ultimately be inconsistent with their own intention, because patronage and influence enabled the executive to check the legislative and was the sole efficacious means for the purpose especially in Ireland after its legislative independence of 1782. At that time, the constitutional system in Ireland was no longer a political framework or machine providing checks and balances. In terms of mutual control between the executive and the legislative, the legislative power of the Irish Parliament could be checked only by the authority of the "British" crown. There was no domestic counter-power for the legislative. Hence, every collision between the legislative and the executive inevitably appeared to be an Anglo-Irish conflict, and gave patriotic MPs an opportunity to demand an exclusion of the British influence. Moreover, in terms of separation of the legislative authority inside parliament, the two Houses did not represent a sufficiently different spread of interests (social groups) to check each other, because of the narrow and limited representative system of the Commons. The 1782 system remained in danger of turning into a despotism of Protestant aristocracy. Exercise of the patronage and influence enabled the executive to contain the legally predominant power of the legislative.

This first speech of O'Connor reveals his scientific Whiggish view on politics. As mentioned in chapter 6, his second speech on the East India trade bill, which discussed the expediency of the actual restriction on Irish trade, also conveyed his view. On the other hand, it is interesting that these speeches did not touch on any questions about exploitative aspects of the British empire. With his open detestation of vulgar Whiggish patriots like the Whig club, O'Connor saw them as a mere native aristocracy in the guise of guardians of the

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9 Ibid., p.351.
10 Ibid., p.350.
Irish nation and he expected the executive authority of the crown to strive to weaken them.

His pamphlet in 1794, *The Measures...*, which explained the state of affairs in Europe at that time on the basis of his general social theory, illustrates what he thought of Britain at that moment. In short, he expected the authority and influence of British administration would promote change in Irish society from a monopolistic aristocratic one to a civilised commercial one; hence, its presence was expedient for the accomplishment of the progress of history. He certainly shared a sense of development-centric modernism with Protestant liberals like John Hely-Hutchinson and Laurence Parsons. However, there was a crucial difference between them. The development-centric modernists stressed the necessity of support from the British administration in order to maintain the actual social order. On the other hand, O'Connor foresaw that, although a civilised commercial society would take shape in the course of economic development, sooner or later it must be incompatible with the present political framework of Protestant aristocracy; and as a result, the British administration would contribute toward undermining the latter.

He was guided by a theoretical or conjectural history (a ‘four stages’ theory of history), very similar to the theories which Hume and Smith developed. The first stage is a savage state, where “every man has the same occupation” to provide “subsistence for himself and his family”. Then, as human beings progress from the savage state to the middle (second and third agricultural stage of “shepherds and husbandmen”), “a middle state of society, in which hereditary aristocracy is in its utmost power” is increasingly formed. Surplus produce and the want of social intercourse and consequent collision call forth “domination and tyranny” of the aristocracy.

This aristocratic domination itself, composed of quite independent monarchical units in an agricultural world, further created “the monopolising laws of primogeniture and entail” to transmit actual order and power from generation to generation. Although laws were actually only the will of a despot and his

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11 Smith portrayed the history as the progression from hunter to shepherd to farmer to merchant. Each stage concerns not only increasing plenty, but a growing division of labour, changing mode of possession and developing civilisation of society and personality. Unlike Smith, Hume divided the progress of society into three stages, in which the state of shepherd and that of farmer were joined together: savage society, agricultural society and commercial society. Although O’Connor mentioned Smithian terms, he basically argued within the Humean framework.
possession of land was only a habit, they controlled the minds of a degraded and debased people, because the want of knowledge, combination and energy made them "inaccessible to the most distant ideas of the rights of mankind". 12

This agricultural society and its aristocracy were to be undermined by expansion of social intercourse owing to "the invention of the mariner’s compass" and "the art of printing". By swelling waves of intercourse and collision "man strikes from man", and by those sparks "his mind is enlightened and his blood is warmed". This sequence of changes in human activity and mentality brings about a revolution in civil society, "which has led the mind to measure institutions by the standard of utility, and to spurn those which have no better title than accident, usurpation, or caprice to uphold them". 13

Seeing the ongoing convulsion all over Europe as this very revolution, O'Connor said: "Europe has not only past [passed] into the commercial state, but most parts have begun to feel its influence. Commerce has introduced, not only new classes of men into society, but it has altered the condition of those who were in it before". He pointed out several aspects of the inconsistency between the socioeconomic system which had preserved conventional aristocratic domination and that which the commercial society would involve. To begin with, he discussed the inevitable fall of the aristocracy in terms of changing relations of power and authority in the commercial state. As long as the aristocracy confined its residence to the country, the expenditure of their fortunes, circulating mainly within their own domain, did not lead them to their "sinking under the rival, wealth and independence of the merchants and manufacturers of the towns"; the expenditure of wealth in the country and the absence of a third person who intervened "between the buyer and the seller, the employer and those employed" preserved the state of dependence on the aristocracy; once the aristocracy were lured into the capital city by their preference for its refinements, they were to lose their firm base; "the frequency and the universality with which fortunes are acquired in a commercial country" would take away "the great respect that used to be paid to the persons and families of rich men". 14

Then, he made a case against the laws of primogeniture and entail, which he saw as a fundamental factor in a monopoly of landed property. He argued that agricultural produce sustains labourers of all kinds of industry; although a population is sustainable in a society composed of the aristocracy and peasantry, "when manufacturers, a new and productive class, come to be added to the population, the 'difficulty' of providing food for those additional numbers,

12 O'Connor, The Measures of the Ministry to Prevent a Revolution, are the Certain Means of Bringing it on (London, 1794), p.27 ff..
13 Ibid., p.29.
14 Ibid., p.30f..
makes it necessary, as population increases, . . . to lessen the number of those who do nothing towards feeding themselves, in order that the numbers who do may be increased. 15 After examining the bad effects of the dominating unproductive class in demographic terms, he called for the abolition of the laws of primogeniture and entail, which had preserved the families of the aristocracy: Cease to continue those laws in a commercial state, which are only to be endured in the state of shepherds and husbandmen. Destroy the laws of primogeniture and intail, those absurd laws, which the pride of family has retained, for the purpose of perpetuating the monopoly of land to the few, to which they have taken care all political power should be annexed. 15

Thomas Paine as well, seeing primogeniture as a keystone of aristocracy, criticised the sanctified notion of heredity, in which conventional rights consisted. Unlike him, O'Connor developed his case against primogeniture in terms of the unprofitable expenditure of resources and capital it would cause. He argued that if primogeniture and entail should remain in commercial society, they would bring about monopoly not only of landed property, but of capital, through succession of an eldest son to the whole property in each family of wealthy merchants and manufacturers; his possession of too large of capital would lead him to unproductive use of that which should have gone to employ productive industry. On the other hand, the monopoly of landed property would cause the two evils, "which cannot be endured in the increasing population of a commercial state". First, immense tracts of land would remain unimproved and productivity of land would not increase because of the want of industriousness of the peasant, who, if on the other hand he were a small proprietor, would be "willing because he is working for himself and his family, and able because he has the whole produce to effect what he is so interested in accomplishing". Secondly, the monopoly would make elections corrupt, because the landed interests were apt to execute a monopoly of power over those whose livelihood depends on them, when they stand for election; hence, "considerable number of independent wills" are to be annihilated. Then, he emphasised the need to establish a new mode of consumption, in which consumption of national produce entails reproduction and increase of capital, in order to increase "the happiness of the laborious", and observed:

By one mode of expenditure the fund for the employment of the industrious is squandered, by the other it is saved and augmented; by one mode of consumption the increasing population has an increasing fund to pay the wages of the industrious: by the other it must languish, from being deprived of it. 17

In this way, O'Connor discussed the inconsistency between the emerging commercial society and the established legal and political system. As Hume

15 Ibid., p.31f.
16 Ibid., p.35.
17 Ibid., p.37.
considered that rights existed only in society and should be justified as functions of human nature and natural circumstances, O'Connor as well thought that the commercial state should have its own appropriate mode of government, because, although the inevitable ignorance and vices of human nature call for control by government, the way in which people are governed depends on the degree of their ignorance and vices. He observed: “in proportion as nations are well or ill informed, as they are virtuous or vicious, in an exact degree they will be competent to enjoy that free government, of which mildness and justice shall be the characteristics, or they will be doomed to that despotism ...”. 18 His Humean way of thinking led him to suggest a unique basis for the claim for the political participation of the people. He thought that it was not natural rights of men but their advanced knowledge and civilised manners in parallel with the progress of society which justified the democratic system; although ignorance and violence among people in the savage state might require a despotic government to maintain peace and order, such a government becomes outdated in the commercial society. If a mode of government is appropriate to a social state, he went on to say, the “necessary ingredients for promoting social intercourse, by facilitating government, should be as operative as possible” and “the Constitution should be founded on such impartial principles, as will occasion the least possible temptation to violate their dictates”. On this principle, he advocated reforming the actual government, whose defects were seen as “impediments to their welfare” by “the great majority of the nation” 19.

O'Connor, however, considered that Hume’s knowledge of the influence of the commercial state on government was imperfect. Criticising Hume’s general notion of society, where people act uniformly “under the forms of governments which chance or usurpation had set over them”, he imagined a new society, where emulation by each individual results in a check on aggrandizement by the others, and by its new government, whose powers were controlled by “millions, whose knowledge and independence enabled them to detect and punish the least infraction of the law”. 20 In this way, although Hume himself did not deal with the question of the political participation of people, namely democracy, O'Connor grounded democracy on the Humean concept of right of liberty as a legal empowerment to contend against authority and declared that the commercial society enabled and required people to participate in politics.

It was this democratic tendency which led O'Connor to detest the Irish parliamentary opposition. By “corruption”, he meant the decline of representative democracy in the Commons due to the prevailing bribery in

18 Ibid., p.42.
19 Ibid., p.43.
20 Ibid., p.46.
elections. He considered that the House had been occupied by those who were representative only of the aristocratic landed interests and were easily lured into supporting taxes on other people by the patronage of the crown and minister:

it is those monopolising and exclusionary principles which have almost annihilated your representative democracy; it is the gradual operation of those principles which has converted your house of representatives into an assembly of chartered aristocracy.  21

While the opposition saw pensions and places as corruption, he considered it as only a secondary matter and observed: "the only effectual way of lessening the numbers of clerks and advocates is to diminish the quantity of business they will have to perform, by which means, the laws will be made to answer their proper object, by making them intelligible to those they were meant to protect and to control".  22 In his eyes, the so-called opposition, especially those who did not favour Catholic enfranchisement, seemed to deliberately leave untouched for their own benefit the essential matter of democratic representation, and, hypocritically making a fuss about trifles, reduced the matter of parliamentary reform to that of patronage. His indignation at their ignoring representative democracy was soon to be shown in his parliamentary speech on the Catholic bill in May 1795.

It is noteworthy that his claim of restoring representative democracy rested on the need of a counter-power strong enough to check rising national debt and taxes. He thought that the decay of representative democracy in the Commons had undermined from inside its essential authority to consent to national budgets and new taxes, and as a result led to the increasing national debt. Illustrating the relationship between the deterioration of representative system and increase of taxes and national debt, he warned that the defect of the legislative would destroy the development of civilised commercial society in Britain and Ireland:

From 1760, when even the shadow of their representative democracy began to act, corruption was employed, debt began, and with it, taxes increased; slowly down to 1782, as long as the control of the British legislature rendered it less necessary to influence in the true constitutional way ... the state of your representation and that of the people of Ireland is constituted with sufficient power to involve you in debt, which must be your ruin, without sufficient energy to make an effort which can save you.  23

Swelling national expenditure and increasing taxes were the outcome of administration of the expanding empire, more than of extravagance at Court. While development-centric imperialists expected that the aggrandizement of the empire would enable the lower class also to enjoy its prosperity, O'Connor

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21 Ibid., p.19.
22 Ibid., p.33.
23 Ibid., p.18.
claimed that, unless domestic monopoly was eradicated, warlike imperial policy
would only enlarge the difference between the rich and ruling class and the lower
one and drive the latter into poverty. He observed: “the monopoly of extreme
wealth in the hands of a few, has occasioned an insupportable extreme poverty
in the many”, and war “is to add to that poverty without diminishing from that
inequality of wealth”. O’Connor argued that ongoing revolutions in civil
societies in Europe “must bring men to nearer equality, than they are in at
present” and repeal the inequality which “had been forced and maintained”; on
the other hand, those who had possessed power and property would desperately
battle against the “storms to equalise their portions through the globe”; hence,
the forthcoming war was the outcome of the battle, not for the benefit of the
whole society.

Although this argument illustrates O’Connor’s awareness of a class
problem, it should not be understood as a consciousness of class struggle in a
Marxian sense or of leveling in a vulgar millenarian sense. His emphasis is
placed on the creation of the middle class, which he saw as an essential part of
the new commercial society. He thought that the old ruling class, by stripping
the lower class of the necessary conditions for their self-enlightenment and
elevation to the middle, was to impede the progress of civil society; hence, it
should be abolished. Moreover, as he considered a spirit of emulation among
people as the driving force behind the progress of commercial society, he thought
that it was desirable that people should be under relatively equal conditions in
order to sustain social emulation.

8.2 Confrontation with the Irish Political Monopoly Made Public: 1795

Since The measures... was actually written for people in Britain, it did not
directly deal with Irish affairs. Nevertheless, it successfully crystallised the
very target of his criticism, the monopolised system, under aristocracy, of the
actual state of Ireland. While in the eyes of those who read this anonymous
pamphlet O’Connor seems to have retained a certain consistency of policy since
he went into politics, it was difficult for his contemporaries to understand what
he really meant in his “satirical” speeches, because his scientific and skeptical
(or dialectical) way of thinking involved some deliberate satirical double
meanings. His real political position remained veiled until, disgusted at the
rejection of the Catholic bill, he launched into an attack against the whole
parliament dominated by monopolistic factions.

In May 1795, O’Connor opened his speech by avowing his support of the

24 Ibid., p.52.
25 Ibid., p.51.
unqualified emancipation of Catholics. He argued for the emancipation in two terms. First, it was just in terms of the claim for freedom. Secondly, “continuing to sacrifice the civil and political rights of the people” is “inexpediency and folly” and, far from “promoting religion”, it leads to aggrandizement of “a few families”.

Then, he argued that, although the actual system of monopoly and exclusion did not deserve a free constitution, yet “the most egregious job [i.e. monopoly and exclusion] had been concealed under a specious phraseology” in Ireland and made the country “the most wretched, and most miserable nation in Europe”. Moreover, pointing out that supporters of the monopoly, dealing with the British government, had sold Irish rights, trade and industry for their own jobs and patronage, he declared:

Here is a system by which the people of this country would be doubly impoverished, to pay for that treason which was to revile and vilify them in the legislature of their own country, and to pay for that treason which was to sacrifice their dearest interest to the aggrandizement of another nation.

As mentioned in Chapters 6 and 7, a twofold subjugation was an issue for Tone as early as 1790. Until the dismissal of Fitzwilliam, however, the connection between the British administration and Irish domestic factions such as the Beresfords had not appeared as a central feature in open or public controversy. The administration, differing with the domestic factions on the Catholic issue, had in fact seemed to support the gradual emancipation of Catholics during the first half of the 1790s. Hence, O'Connor had expected that the British administration, despite opposition from an aristocratic faction, would promote the progress of Irish society towards the real commercial stage. Just as figuratively he had said in 1794 that children needed guardians, he had seen the British administration in the role of guardian. As is clear from his next pamphlet, A Letter to the Earl of Carlisle, O'Connor supported much of the reform policy of the Fitzwilliam administration. Fitzwilliam’s recall, however, revealed to him the imperialistic nature of the British administration. Formerly he had recognised the constitutional authority of the British ministers, to appoint the Lord Lieutenant on behalf of the Crown, as the “domestic” executive power within the pale of the “Irish” constitution, but now he became aware of the exploitative relationship between the British administration and Ireland. The affair changed his view of British ministers and their influence over Ireland. To his mind, the British administration, no longer representing civil government, had become foreign domination, whose primary intention was to subject Ireland to its rule as securely as possible. In this way, he was faced with a serious problem about imperialism, which could not be solved by his Humean constitutionalism.

26 Speech of Arthur O’Connor on the Catholic Question (Dublin, 1795), p.3.
27 Ibid., p.6.
At this stage, O'Connor had not yet realised that the political system of the British empire itself was exploitative and subjugating. It was the British Prime minister, Pitt the Younger, and his policy which became the target of O'Connor's criticism. While O'Connor saw the Prime Minister as the root of all evil, he still expected some liberal democratic politicians inside the British government to champion the right of the Irish nation to establish its own civil government. He understood that the Prime Minister, assuming a sympathetic attitude towards Catholic emancipation, had cheated Irish people into support of the war with France. He portrayed the alliance between Pitt and Portland Whigs as follows:

A British minister ... has raised our hopes in order to seduce a rival to share with him the disgrace of this accused political crusade, and blasts them after, that he may degrade a competitor to the station of a dependant; and he may destroy friendship his nature never knew, he has sported with the feelings of a whole nation.

Furthermore, O'Connor recognised that the dismissal of Fitzwilliam and the restoration of the old faction to the Castle meant forcing the nation “to a re-endurance of their former sufferings, and to a re-appointment of their former spoilers”. Hence, he appealed to MPs to represent “the will of the people” by consenting to the Catholic bill, and opposing the offensive reaction. Judging the actual situation as a serious collision of the British administration with Irish public opinion outside the parliament, he warned the Prime Minister that his strong line on Ireland might involve “the whole empire in a civil war, from which nothing can accrue, but a doleful and barren conquest to the victor”. Then, he requested the people of England not to force such measures upon Ireland as “they would reject with disdain themselves”.

O'Connor conceived that the possibility of further parliamentary resistance to the British administration depended on the decision making by the parliament at that very moment on the Catholic bill, because it was impossible for people to form or present a national consensus in a parliamentary way, unless the parliament, asserting itself to be representative of the Irish nation, came into line with public opinion. O'Connor thought that, if the bill was passed, there would be room for negotiation with the Prime Minister about the establishment of a new regime, such as had been effected during the administration of Lord Fitzwilliam; otherwise, the political situation would be forced back to the old regime as it was before 1782:

the British minister will leave you in the lurch, when he sees that the people of this nation are TOO MUCH IN EARNEST to be tricked out of their rights, or their independence of their country; after he sees that they have been sufficiently alarmed at seeing the same men who uniformly opposed the independence of their country, when it was a question in this House in

28 Ibid., p.23.
29 Ibid., p.24.
eighty-two, recalled into power when that independence was to be attacked in ninety-five, ... he will make his peace with this country. 30

He also pointed out that the Irish issue had served as an instrument of the Prime Minister to divide the opposition in England. Lord Fitzwilliam's letters revealed that Catholic emancipation, which the Portland Whigs supported, had been accepted by the Prime Minister in the agreement between the Prime Minister and the Portland Whigs in exchange for union with England and the continuation of the war, which Foxite Whigs opposed. Hence, the legitimatizing of Catholic emancipation in the Irish parliament itself was the most effective measure for Ireland to secure both its national independence and Catholic emancipation. O'Connor cautioned MPs:

you who shall on this night vote for the rejection of this bill, will appear in the eyes of the Irish nation, not only as men voting in obedience to the British minister, against the voice of the people, but as men voting for an UNION WITH ENGLAND, by which this country is to be everlastingly reduced to the state of an abject province. 31

He tried in vain to persuade MPs to support the Catholic bill for the benefit of the nation.

O'Connor's call for Catholic emancipation also meant the reform of the domestic political system in accordance with the progress of civil society, which stemmed from his general social view. He pointed out the connection between the advance in political systems and the development of commerce:

Look around the world, and you will find in those countries where foreign commerce is discouraged, and where the invention of the press is unknown, that despotism uniformity prevails over liberty; Turn your eyes from these wretched countries to the several nations of Europe, and you will find how uniformly civil, political, and religious liberty have taken place of civil, political, and religious slavery, in proportion as foreign commerce has been encouraged, and as the press has been protected. See how uniformly these causes and effects correspond. 32

On this general principle, he claimed that Ireland stood in need of liberal reform of the political system so as to achieve the commercial stage:

[1]s it when our country is becoming commercial, under all its artificial disadvantages; is it when we have thrown off some of the shackles of our trade, and when, by passing this bill, by creating a people, we shall be enabled to restore it to perfect freedom, that we are to reject this bill, through fear of destroying posterity? 33

For him, Catholic emancipation meant a first step towards secularisation of the Protestant constitution and democratisation of the monopolised old regime. Referring to the various evils arising from the fusion between civil and ecclesiastical polities, he especially criticised tithes for their destructive effects on agriculture, the “most important branch of industry” in which people of

30 Ibid., p.29f..
31 Ibid., p.28f.
32 Ibid., p.11f..
33 Ibid., p.12.
Ireland could be employed. "He declared that it was not reformation but abuses which were the parent of revolution; "a timely and radical reform of those abuses, as well in church as in state, are the only security against those convulsions, which shake society to its foundation". The bill was rejected by a large majority.

O' Connor published *A Letter to the Earl of Carlisle...* shortly after this speech whose content was quite unexpected. The pamphlet is interesting for his ambiguous attitude towards the union with Britain. As mentioned above (p.205), the scheme to unite Ireland and Great Britain made O'Connor realise the unfairness of British government. At this stage, however, he still did not think that the power of British administration should be excluded from Ireland. Distinguishing between its authority and its unconstitutional influence caused by corruption, he still accepted its authority as long as it promoted civilisation in Ireland. He saw it as a realistic way for the Lord Lieutenant to lead people to political reform to establish a new regime in accordance with their own claim, excluding old aristocratic factions from power; otherwise, there was little possibility for people to effect any reform under the ascendancy of those revived factions. Dismissing Pitt as allied through corruption with factions, he still intended to persuade liberal MPs in Britain to reconsider the dismissal of Lord Fitzwilliam. He wrote to the Earl of Carlisle, who had brought legislative independence to Ireland during his administration between 1780 and 1782, to line up against Pitt and resume efforts to establish a new liberal regime in Ireland. He said: "[H]ad the Commission in which you presided been well timed, ... the United States at this day might have formed a part of the British empire". Appealing to the Earl of Carlisle to make a “well timed” decision about Irish affairs, he went on: "[W]hat applied to America, will now apply to Ireland; if concessions are to be granted, no time should be lost in granting them". Specifically, calling for the return of Lord Fitzwilliam, he expressed admiration for his administration: "an universal shout of acclamation burst from every part of the kingdom at once, and by associating in his councils men of virtue and talents, and proved himself the true friend of Ireland, and he therefore justly merits the entire confidence of the nation". This was his ultimatum to those who, boasting of the free constitution of the British empire, saw it as securing the justice of each part of the empire. In his previous speech, he alluded to the other alternative, an alliance with Republican France as a new guardian, if the British empire would not deserve to be relied on." Unlike Tone, O'Connor judged not Britain but the domestic aristocratic factions as the prime target, and

34 Ibid., p.19.

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sought external aid to abolish them, because he could not find any expectation of unaided civilising of Ireland in the attitude of Irish politicians towards reform. Condemning them for their opportunism, he commented that since the dismissal of Lord Fitzwilliam “the Catholic Emancipation Bill” had been “thrown out in the Irish House of Commons by a great majority; by a majority which a month before was prepared most obsequiously to support the measure”. 38 Although he optimistically judged that a majority favoured Catholic emancipation at least during the Fitzwilliam administration, it is likely that a majority opposed Catholic emancipation even before the dismissal. In reality, the actual condition for reform and modernisation was even more limited than O’Connor supposed. The titular representatives for the Irish nation were totally incapable of liberating Ireland, and the British administration was apt to make a compromise with them at a crucial moment.

O’Connor made a further argument in favour of the Fitzwilliam administration. He said that Fitzwilliam “overthrew the hydra of corruption” and appointed “men of the first-rate abilities”, “men who had justly acquired the unbounded confidence of the People, and who served their country without place or pension”. Concerning Fitzwilliam’s domestic policy, O’Connor also considered it as useful for civilisation:

the grand object of his benevolent policy, extended even to the cottages of the poor, who were at length ... relieved from the distressing Hearth Tax. He encouraged the breweries, and restrained the immoderate consumption of spirituous liquors, which had so dreadfully affected the health, morals, and industry, of the lower orders. He abolished the odious and detested Police; an institution that answered no other purpose than to increase patronage, to tax and oppress the country, and to disgrace and corrupt the magistracy.

Furthermore, referring to Fitzwilliam’s policy on the war with France, he said:

he united all Parties in the support of a hateful and ruinous war, -not that the nation approved of either its principles or continuance, but from the generous resolution, -even while inevitable destruction seemed impending, -that Ireland would share the fate of, and stand or fall with Great Britain”; he obtained , in consequence, unprecedented supplies of men and money towards the defence of the empire. 39

The literal and superficial understanding of his words above might lead us to judge that he had a favorable opinion of Fitzwilliam and that he supported both his typical Whiggish domestic policy and the war with France. This understanding is, however, inconsistent with his bitter criticism of Irish Whigs’ claim against corruption and police in his parliamentary speeches and with his case against the war in his former pamphlet. Although his satirical mode of expression makes it difficult for us to define the position O’Connor took in reality, we should not make light of its consistency, by interpreting it as a change in his view or as the duplicity set put in traditional historiographical portrayals of him.

38 A Letter to the Earl of Carlisle (London, 1795), p.27.
39 Ibid., p.32.
O'Connor presupposed that there must have been a secret contract between the British administration and the Irish opposition at the time of the appointment of Fitzwilliam for the redress of the grievances of the Irish nation by way of reward for their reluctant and immense contribution to the ongoing war, by using Fitzwilliam as the guarantee of its fulfillment. Then, he tried to convince readers that the dismissal of the very guarantee by the British administration meant nonfulfillment of the contract. He portrayed this unfair breach of contract as the “ignominy and treachery of this precipitate measure” ⁴⁰. He pointed out that such a treacherous conduct and coercive measure of the government might occasion a civil war at the “eventful period,” when “the old frame of civil institutes” became “unhinged and disjoined”, and declared: there are two possible expedients that Government can make use of, to allay the rising ferment of discontent and disaffection, -COERCION and REDRESS. The first cannot produce permanent effects, while its immediate operation must be terrible; but the other, as it is founded on the immutable laws of justice and humanity, must be the safest, easiest, and most durable, because it secures obedience to the laws, and loyalty to the throne, on the surest of all tenures -THE LOVE OF THE PEOPLE. ⁴¹

This extract shows us how his claim is grounded on the Humean and Burkeian constitutionalism. The logic of his argument is similar to that which Burke used in his famous speech On Moving Resolutions for Conciliation with America in 1775. Appealing to MPs to secure the interests of American colonies so as to redress their grievance, Burke said:

Let the Colonies always keep the idea of their civil rights associated with your Government; - they will cling and grapple to you; and no force under heaven will be of power to tear them from their allegiance. But let it be once understood, that your Government may be one thing, and their Privileges another; that these two things may exist without any mutual relation; the cement is gone; the cohesion is loosened; and every thing hastens to decay and dissolution. ⁴²

For the same reason, O'Connor appealed to the British government to reconsider Catholic emancipation as the most efficacious measure to conciliate the Irish nation. However, all his purely constitutional efforts were in vain.

8.3 Efforts towards Forming an Alliance with the Foxite Whigs and Liberals

After O'Connor published the letters, he went over to London where he was in contact with the Foxite Whigs. His conduct during the latter half of 1795 has been understood as an ambitious effort to secure a seat in the British

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.34.
⁴¹ Ibid., p.35.
⁴² “Speech of Edmund Burke on Moving his Resolutions for Conciliation with the Colonies, 22 March 1775”, in Edmund Burke: Pre-Revolutionary Writings, p.265.
parliament so as to survive as a politician after his break with his uncle, Lord Longueville, who had procured him his Irish seat. His approach to the Foxite Whigs, however, should not be seen as a desperate private expedient. As mentioned above, he had an apprehension that the further pursuit of reform of the old regime in Ireland would involve a civil war so long as the British government would continue patronising the old factions. Hence, he expected the Foxite Whigs to champion the rights of Irish people in parliament in an effort to dissuade the British administration from taking a strong line over Irish affairs.

O'Connor's wish to procure a seat in the British Commons would logically provide an opportunity for him to set out his case there, elaborating on a grand scale and in a more exalted assembly the themes of his May 1795 address to the Irish Commons. In a sense, as in the case of his idea of offering himself for Antrim in the 1797 general election, or in the case of the intellectual density of the May 1795 speech, there was a touching belief in the power of reasoning. While this can be related also to the megalomania and belief in his own power, which unkind critics have found in him, there is a logic or coherence in his thought itself. Immediately after he asked Charles. J. Fox to procure him an English seat, he went over to France and negotiated the French expedition to Ireland with General Hoche. Furthermore, he built up a wide association with the circle of English liberal politicians, which ranged around Francis Burdett, who was a city-radical MP in John Horne Tooke's political milieu. Burdett and Horne Tooke, distinguishing the restoration of the ancient principles of the Constitution from the cause of French principles, had been advocating political reform. Judging that the Whig tradition of freedom and resistance to oppression had been perverted, they condemned the party politics both of Whigs and Tories as the system of corruption.

Burdett wrote several letters to O'Connor in Belfast in admiration of him in the autumn and the winter of 1796. Although Burdett had become close to O'Connor only the year before when the latter stayed in England, he quite agreed with him about his political view.

O'Connor's political idea was welcomed by Foxite Whigs and traditional advocates of restoration of liberal principles of the constitution. This means that O'Connor still remained within the framework of British constitutionalism even after he negotiated with General Hoche a plan to send a French expeditionary force to Ireland. His correspondence with Fox and Burdett towards the end of 1796 reveals the outline of his project in that stage. O'Connor sent two letters to Brigadier-General John Knox in Dungannon and asked him to support him at the forthcoming election. John Knox was also a friend of Thomas Russell and a brother of George Knox, Tone's close friend.


Knox used to have a favorable opinion of O'Connor. It was Knox who invited O'Connor to Ryde in the Isle of Wright in 1793, where O'Connor prepared to publish his first radical pamphlet, *The Measures*... Furthermore, immediately after O'Connor’s speech on the Catholic bill, Knox wrote a letter to O'Connor to applaud his courage. The letter said: “I congratulate you very heartily in your late speech -which I understand contained more pathetical boldness than any ever delivered in a House of Commons. ... I wish you send me a copy of it”. Hence, O'Connor, naturally expecting Knox to make common cause with him, sought his support. However, Knox turned down the request. As early as 1796, Knox was too deeply concerned by the implications of sectarian clashes in the North to accept O'Connor’s optimistic liberal view. Just before he gave an answer to O'Connor’s letters, the latter’s first address, *To the Free Electors of the County of Antrim* was published. Judging the address as "mad", Knox thought that O'Connor had adopted the wrong line, because his standing for election in Antrim was not well-judged under actual war-time conditions. Far from destruction of the monopoly, in his view, O'Connor’s conduct would prompt people “to rush upon their own destruction”. He had realised that, exposed to the threat of French invasion, the people of the North had split into two deeply divided sects. Hence, under the apprehension that the split would occasion civil war, he judged that the actual state of the North stood in need of urgent attention to calm the people. It was different views on the political condition at that moment, rather than ideological difference, which made the two men differ. O'Connor, although aware of the danger of civil war, more optimistically foresaw a wave of union among people as overcoming momentary sectarian clashes, as his letter to Fox dated 24th December 1796 says. On the other hand, Knox, more familiar with the political circumstance in the North, found no rosy prospect of a spreading union.

O'Connor meanwhile asked Burdett and Fox to champion the rights of the Irish people. Burdett’s letter dated 15th January 1797 shows us that he had not been informed about O'Connor’s plan to establish a new national government on the occasion of French invasion. He was glad of the failure of French troops’ landing due to a storm and wrote: “What a fortunate storm you have been delivered by from an invasion”. Although some of O’Connor’s intentions were hidden from Burdett, the letter tells us that Burdett saw himself, as a British supporter of O'Connor, making common cause with him. He wrote: “Pray send me a general direction how I may send any thing to you and may happen to meet with”. Then, he told O'Connor that he intended to make a speech on the actual state of the Irish nation in the forthcoming session.

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45 General Knox to O'Connor, 11 May, 1795, N.A.I., Rebellion Papers 620/15/3/2.
46 Knox to O’Connor, 26 October, 1796, N.A.I., Rebellion Papers 620/15/3/8.
of the British parliament. "I have an ardent desire to promote it, and a thorough conviction of its justice and necessity for the happiness of Man can do any thing towards furnishing the powers requisite for pleading it with effect; I may without vanity promise myself some degree of success".

O'Connor sent a letter to Fox on 24 December, immediately after the French fleet reached Bantry Bay. He entreated with him to recognise the new situation of Ireland, which would "be attended with important consequences". Saying that "a new order of things would force its way into the world and that so far from any civilised nation standing in need of the importation of what's called revolutionary or French principles from France", he tried to persuade him that it was necessary for the progress of civil society in Ireland to establish a new regime on French principles. He briefly explained to Fox the actual state of Ireland before the war with France and said that religious discrimination, which subordinated the people of Ireland to "the most contemptible factions" amongst themselves, had served as a device for submitting to "the dependence" they had "suffered under Great Britain", and that the linen manufacture was only "a peace offering" in return for "the injustice", which Irish trade and manufactures had "suffered to aggrandize England". Then, referring to the new situation occasioned by "the Presbyterians of the North" who had "sought with uncommon zeal a union with the Catholics and Protestants", he told him about the secret societies of United Irishmen and their purposes. He tried to convince him that, although the government judged them as treasonable, they did not infringe the constitution, and he declared: "Those of Union never riot nor never commit any infractions of the Law. They are waiting patiently until they find a good opportunity to speak their sentiments but they do not think themselves authorised to do so until they have a decided Majority of the Nation with them". Then, he told Fox that the two sects in Armagh, the Defenders and the Orangemen, which had been in conflict with each other, had arrived at an agreement to form a national union. Blaming the government for inducing sectarian clashes, he was convinced of the existence of the union. Hence, he asked Fox to recognise "the Account of the Transactions of Armagh" as the real voice of the nation, which was never represented in the parliament.

O'Connor had written this letter to Fox at a moment when he expected French troops to land in Ireland soon. He planned to establish a new regime after the landing of French troops, while at the same time Foxite Whigs and

"Burdett to O'Connor, 15th January 1797, N.A.I., Rebellion Papers 620/15/3/26. Burdett made a speech in the British Commons on 23 March 1797. After Fox condemned Pitt for his coercion over Ireland, Burdett, referring to O'Connor's arrest, demanded Pitt's resignation from the Cabinet: "There is ... one way, and only one, for saving Ireland, for saving England; that is, to divest the present Minister of that power, he has so long and so fatally abused" (Report of Debates in the House of Commons of Ireland, session 1796-7... to which are annexed debates in the British Parliament upon Mr Fox's motion, touching the state of Ireland, Dublin, 1797, p.223).
liberal reformers would make out a case in the British parliament for a new government. However, the plan did not eventuate, because winter storms made it impossible to land the French troops.

Before O'Connor asked Burdett and Fox to back his case, he had formed an alliance with France when he went to France in August 1796. In the negotiations with General Hoche, he arranged the expedition to “Ireland”. When this fact was revealed in the course of his trial in 1798, his English Whig supporters condemned his conduct as a betrayal. For O'Connor himself, however, his conduct was consistently fair and just. From the outset of the alliance with France, he conceived the planned expedition not as “an invasion of England” but “military aid to Ireland”. In his eyes, English Whigs and French officials alike were foreign agents for the separation of Ireland. Not only O'Connor, but Tone, Neilson and Sampson had the same belief. They believed that, although any commitment of the United Irishmen to a French expedition to “England” would properly be considered as support of an armed intervention, one to their native land could be justified. When the secret committee of the Commons “stigmatized” them by “a charge of inviting the French to an invasion of England”, Neilson and O'Connor in prison, objecting to the committee’s view, stressed the fact that they planned not the invasion of England, but a French expedition to Ireland. Arthur O’Connor’s Letter to Lord Castlereagh, dated 4 January 1799, was a product of their struggle with the secret committee. O’Connor in the pamphlet asserted that he had dissuaded General Hoche from any “interference of the French” in England “on the same just principle, that they condemned the interference of England in the government of France”, and that he had explained the need of aid to Ireland, where “the people were most solicitous to rescue themselves from foreign and domestic tyranny”.

O’Connor’s ideas were bold and optimistic. They may well have made light of the complexities of the Irish situation, or of the prospects of meaningful “union” of people, as Knox’s correspondence suggested. While his own views on the British empire slowly came to change, his thought still preserved much of its underlying consistency. His The State of Ireland written at the outset of 1798, seems to confirm that, and his fateful journey to London and planned visit to France suggest that at the time of his arrest at Margate in February 1798 his strategy remained “frozen” in the complex triangular --and arguably unrealistic-- pattern of solving the Irish problem with Whig goodwill and French help. A marked anti-imperial theme is the major innovation in it. That itself represented the evolution of thought under the pressure of events. It accorded also with the shift in the emphasis of Tone’s thought, and the theme was

45 Ibid., p.29.
foreshadowed more centrally and more preciously in the thought of Russell, the least theoretic of the three men.
Chapter 9:
TONE'S DILEMMA IN PARIS AND RUSSELL'S VOICE AGAINST IMPERIALISM: 1795-96

9.1 Objection to the Alarm of a French Invasion

Since William Jackson's arrest in the spring of 1794 revealed a conspiracy in alliance with France to overthrow the actual regime, the British administration, alerted to the danger of a French invasion, had increased the defensive forces in Ireland. The administration not only sent troops from England to Ireland, but counted on the Irish Militia, which had been opposed, when the Militia act was introduced in 1793, by some Volunteer corps who had adhered to the liberal tradition of the old Volunteers. In their eyes, the administration was encroaching on the independence of their native land on the pretext of defending it from France. The mutiny bill in 1781 and the Militia bill in 1793 aroused strong patriotic objection, and compounded the grievance over the virtual lack of the independent rights of diplomacy and defence. Nevertheless, to voice the claim of diplomatic and defensive independence seemed a danger to Anglo-Irish relations not only for the British government but for those who saw the prosperity of Ireland as based on the British empire. After 1795, this political situation was changed by the Fitzwilliam affair and by the scheme, now known, of the alliance with France. It posed stark alternative courses: the ultimate acceptance of British supremacy over the Irish nation for the sake of national defence, or the pursuit of national independence relying on the fraternal internationalism of French government. Many patriots took the former course. Against this stream, leaders of the United Irishmen, criticising the government for the inconsistency between the actual imperial policy and the assumed principles of the British free constitution, advocated people to take the latter cause.

In these circumstances, an anonymous pamphlet entitled The Observations, Occasioned by the Alarm of an Invasion, Propagated by Authority was published. This pamphlet, just as much as O'Connor's writings, illustrates a progressive radicalisation of political thought. It observed: “The most odious and oppressive of all tyrannies is that exercised by one nation over another, or by a large description of the same nation over the remainder. Such a tyranny is unrelenting, cruel, base, and jealous, by nature”. ¹ Pointing out the multiple subjugation system in subject provinces, the author of The Observations... remarked: “once the servitude of a nation is accomplished every kind of ill overflows; with the aid of one slave a second is more easily made; with the aid of

¹The Observations, Occasioned by the Alarm of an Invasion, Propagated by Authority (Dublin, 1796), p.22.
two the acquisition of a third is no difficult matter”. 2 He further argued that, in such a situation, people become incapable of discerning the permanent interests of their country from their own self-interest. Seeing aristocratic monopoly and sectarian disputes as the outcome of such a tyrannical imperial system, he sardonically declared: “an absolute monarchy would be a thousand times preferable. From the height of absolute power, the Monarch would view with equal and impartial regard, every subdivision of his empire and class of his citizens and subjects”. 3

The author of The Observations... asked the readers what interest and prosperity the “defensive” war against French invasion would secure for Ireland. Pointing out that British influence was not essential for the prosperity of the Irish nation, “but, on the contrary, the greatest obstacle to their happiness, union and prosperity”, he remarked: “I do not see why the Irish should prefer being governed as a province on the narrow principles of monopoly and commercial jealousy, to the glorious condition of independence”. 4 Then, in terms of the benefit to the Irish nation, he illustrated how bad and unjust the policy of the government and the decision of Parliament were; the tithe commutation bill, the absentee tax bill, had been rejected to secure the self-interest of the privileged class at the expense of prosperity and happiness of the nation.

Moreover, he criticised those who, representing themselves as supporters of reform, advised people to postpone redress of grievance until peacetime on the pretext of the danger of invasion. Dismissing them as part of the actual monopoly, he claimed that “the times of alarm and danger are the only proper occasion for obtaining redress of grievances”, because, concession of privilege and right could be obtained from the dominant power only “in proportion as the petitioners could turn the balance of political expediency on their side by the dread they inspired”. Stressing the dynamics of a power struggle, he declared that it is “a folly to expect that the hard heart of tyranny or usurpation will be subdued by the mild impulse of humanity, benevolence, compassion, &c. or the persuasive force of argument”. 5 However, he did not appeal to the nation to rise on the landing of French troops, but exhorted them to pursue the “bloodless victory over English monopoly and domestic corruption” by means of a decisive demand to the panicked government for restoration of religious and civil liberty and the rights of citizens and nations, withholding consent to any financial or military cooperation with it. He bitterly condemned as “insidious alarmists” those patriotic politicians, who, while declaring support for public virtue or patriotism, tried to lead people to the uncritical support of national defence:

2 Ibid., p.29.
3 Ibid., p.21.
4 Ibid., p.7ff.
5 Ibid., p.24ff.
When men seek power they talk of public virtue or patriotism, they pursue only their private advantage: the indulgence of the strongest passions inherent in our nature. The duties annexed to station, are not the object of their ambition. ... Their first wish will be to encrease and perpetuate this power in themselves, their families, or favourites; and they will look with abhorrence on any attempt to curtail or diminish it. 

Here, we notice the clear polarisation of the liberal advocates of political reform between patriots and liberal radicals.

Although the pamphlet was published as political propaganda, the discourse in it is conventional. The social view in the pamphlet was strongly influenced by the notion of social progress in Humean and Smithian political philosophy. The author’s criticism of the actual state was underpinned by his definite notion of justice in civil society. He found the essence of the “free constitution” in a guarantee of social justice under the authority of the law. Drawing on the Smithian concept of sympathy, he argued that although sympathy is the primary cement of society and the sole guardian of justice, it becomes an inadequate measure as society extends, because, people sympathise less with those beyond the pale of immediate social intercourse; “hence, the necessity of a more impartial standard to reconcile the clashing interests of individuals and communities ... laws are, in effect, treaties, contracted by the parties harassed by violence, and its consequences”; like the venerated patriarchs in a clan society, laws are “the arbiters who compose disputes, the monitors of duty, the refuge of the weak and afflicted ... they enforced their decisions, not by standing armies, but by their intrinsic justice, and the deference and confidence of the community”. In this way, deriving the authority of law from social recognition, the author explained the mutuality between the progress of civil society and that of human sentiments. The important point to note is his notion of restoration of the peace and harmony in infant society by means of intimate communication, as can be seen in the following quotation:

Society is therefore every thing to man, and for this he was admirably fitted by the moral sympathies implanted in his nature, by the use of speech and the powers of reason, which enabled him to communicate his very soul, his thoughts, passions, wants desires; and knowledge to his fellows, and furnished them with harmonising sympathies to take an interest in the communication, enter into his views and feelings, and partake of his anxiety, fears, joy, hope, or sorrows.

He saw the actual regime as out-of-date despotism. In his view, it was merely a metamorphosis of the military confederation, which resulted from the necessity of repelling invaders at one stage of history, and therefore warlike in its nature. Hence, he argued that the regime did not fit the expanding enlightened civil

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6 Ibid., p.25.
7 Ibid., p.33f.
8 Ibid., p.32.
society. The notion of relativity between the progress of society and the change of regime in this argument shows us the liberal materialism, which we have also found in O'Connor’s thought. In this respect, we should not overlook the fact that the criticism by the author of *The Observations*... of the actual regime focused on its adverse effect on economic progress. He remarked: “those pampered drones, ... prefer the barrenness which brings them nothing, to the fertility which, taking nothing from them at the present, and relieving the pressing want of the most valuable class of men, would ... encrease their emoluments”. Pointing out that the actual social system had deprived both the landed interest and farmers of the motivation to improve their land, by the same token he condemned the method of levying tithes as unfair. Tithes had preyed “on the improving farmer, inflicting a penalty on laudable skill and industry, exactly proportioned to the capital, skill, and labour employed in cultivating his farm”. These examples show the author of *The Observations*... as seeking to reveal the inexpediency of the old regime in all its aspects, and to persuade people to voice an objection to government.

The notion of improving civil society led the author of *The Observations*... to look at the disturbances in Armagh in a new light. He considered that the sectarian clashes in Armagh were the very outcome of the despotic warlike policy of the government; far from the encouragement of social intercourse and peaceful negotiations, the gunpowder, treasonable correspondence, convention and indemnity acts had served as devices for disuniting and oppressing the nation; especially in the North, those acts produced “the dragooning system, the arbitrary imprisonments, prosecutions and violations of the press”; the convention acts deprived the nation of a right of coming together to consult common interests and, if aggrieved, to seek redress in public; hence, those aggrieved had resort to “dark transactions”. Appealing to the public to discern “the dark designs of the insidious prompters behind the curtains”, he blamed a respectable interest within the community for driving country gentlemen into...

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8 The author of *The Observations*... admired classical Greece, which he called a “happy land”, but his ideal of classical Greece society is different from that of civic humanism. Out of the historical knowledge of Greece, he crystallises a prototype not of the republic of civic virtue but of the civil society. Metaphorically contrasting civil societies in Greece with the Roman empire, he portrayed the difference in characteristics of society. Hume criticised the ideal of classical republic for its inconsistency with the rise and progress of the arts, sciences and commerce, namely the civilisation of society. Here, we can find his criticism of the manly, hostile and exclusionist nature of classical republicanism converted into his criticism of warlike policy of imperialism. Using the Greek goddess as a figure of fertility of civilisation, he observed: “the propitious hour ...for the recovery of her ancient honors arrived; the revival of literature, philosophy, and the fine arts, aided by the recent discoveries of the press and compass, have diffused her empire over enlightened Europe” (p.36). This statement reveals that the freedom he sought to restore was less of ancient Anglo-Saxon than of ancient Greece. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the author of *The Observations*..., as well as O’Connor, symbolised the expansion of social intercourse by “the press and compass”.

9 Ibid., p.8 f.

10 Ibid., p.13.
every "violent, or unconstitutional" Court measure under the pretext of strong measures, "by a panic of defenderism". 2 Apprehensive of the bad effect of the indemnity act, he foresaw that the aggrandizement of extra-constitutional power caused by the acts would "keep the community in perpetual alarm and anxiety, form the numerous spies kept in pay to countenance, by their false informations". 3 Indignant with those manipulated by incendiaries, he remonstrated with them as follows:

What infatuation keeps up those shameful divisions, so ruinous to us, and so grateful to our monopolising enemies? surely reason, justice, humanity, religion, condemn it; sound policy, no less than Christianity, forbids it. Who rejoice in those divisions and carefully foment them? your most cruel enemies, blood-suckers, who riot on your spoils. The corrupt agents of a tyrannical and hostile foreign interest, who profit by your follies and your blind bigotry .... your bigotry is itself a crime, a very great crime. 4

This pamphlet is a very good example of fundamental constitutionalism, and was very close to O'Connor's position. The outline of its argument that the actual regime itself is unconstitutional was to recur in O'Connor's speech and addresses. However, there is no evidence to identify the author of the pamphlet. Judging from its jurisprudential style and reference to the disturbances in Armagh, the author could be William Sampson, who became a close political associate of O'Connor in 1796. The tie-up between the two men during the winter of 1796-7 brought about some similarities in the wording they employed, as we shall see in the following chapter.

O'Connor's argument in the first address To the Free Electors of the County of Antrim dated October 22, 1796, takes almost the same line as the author of The Observations... took. O'Connor, asserting that the actual constitution, based on the monopoly of a few individuals, was "their" constitution, appealed to people to "effect its destruction". He claimed that those in the executive and the legislative who had sold "the rights of their country" should be judged as treasonable, and that the attempt of the administration to subvert the liberties of people had functioned as "one revolution". Then, in the same way as the author of The Observations..., O'Connor argued against war with France and declared that the present state, where "laws sought by an unanimous people had been rejected, laws that secured the persons and opinions of the citizen had been suspended", was not worth defending. Furthermore, referring to the disturbances in Armagh, he pointed out that an attempt to arm Irishman against Irishman had made for "the preservation of a system of corruption at home". As he wrote to Fox, he saw the attempt defeated by a union between the Protestants and the

13 Ibid., p.13.
14 Ibid., p.15f..
Catholics. These arguments still remain within the framework of constitutionalism. We cannot find any evident influence of French republicanism in them. They plainly alert the readers how seriously the actual state of Ireland and the policy of the government had deviated from constitutional principles. Judging from their contents, those pamphlets were published with the intent of dissuading country gentlemen from joining the armed forces controlled by the British government. The liberals, idealising the old Volunteers, expected those who once joined the Volunteer corps to march under the standard of the free constitution of Ireland, took action again in favour of their call for rising. They were convinced of the constitutional legitimacy of their claim. The actual situation, however, differed from that in the late 1770s and the early 1780s, where political and military circumstance alike had ruled out any action against the Volunteers. The highly centralised Militia formed by the 1793 act created a force which was in name alone a classic Militia.

9.2 Tone’s Compromise with French Republicanism

Unlike the core concept of social progress and improvement in radical discourse as mentioned in the previous section, Tone’s discourse in An Address to the People of Ireland is based on the concept of liberation from despotism, which pro-revolutionary literature disseminated. The draft of the address was written in March 1796, and some of its contents were to be repeated in his “Memorandums, relative to my Life and Opinions”, written between 7 August and 8 September 1796. The address was prepared for mass propaganda on the landing of French troops in Ireland. The pamphlet openly appealed to people to revolt against the British government in favour of national independence. It declared: “In a war for our liberties, we can admit of no neutrality”. Tone was reluctant to write the manifesto for Ireland. Eventually, he undertook the work, but with unsatisfactory results. However, his argument is fractured. In the Address to the People..., he both initially declares: “the doctrine of Republicanism will finally subvert that of Monarchy”, and later argues that “the object for her immediate consideration, is not whether she shall adopt this or that form of Government, but whether she shall be independent under any”. A few months later, Tone wrote in his memoir: “I think it right to mention, that at this time,
the establishment of a Republic was not the immediate object of my speculations. My object was to secure the independence of my country under any form of government". 19 Obliged in France to prepare a document acceptable to a French "republican" government and hence to adopt a position which was not wholly his, Tone gave vent to his real feelings in the passage of his memoir cited above. Hence, we cannot understand the address as his "personal testament", or take the statement that "my object was to secure the independence of my country" as "a personal manifesto" as Elliott does. Deviation from Tone's original principle found in his writings of 1796 should be attributed to this compromise. it is not the positive change in his view, in Elliott's words "reversing the order of things", giving priority to national independence over the union of sects, which it might on the surface be taken to be. 20 Given the importance of the issue for an attempt to understand the value or consistency of Tone's thoughts, it is necessary to look at the context more fully.

Compared with the fundamental constitutionalist arguments in his earlier writings in Ireland, we do find a considerable difference in Tone's approach. Ironically enough, when the liberal radicals (fundamental constitutionalists) made a case against military mobilisation by government, they used the logic Tone first used in the Spanish War!, that Ireland, as a independent kingdom, had nothing to do with a war between Britain and foreign countries, and that a war was inexpedient to the public interest. On this ground, they sought to keep people neutral and independent both of Britain and France by organising them into the United Irishmen. They expected that, if the people of Ireland refused to support national defence so long as it was controlled by the British government, the Pitt Administration would weaken, which had propped up the domestic monopoly.

On the other hand, in the address Tone took a strong line, going outside the constitutional framework, to exhort people to line up against England. In contrast to his older fundamental constitutionalist view that "the sole constitutional mode by which that [i.e. English] influence could be opposed, was by a complete and radical reform of the representation of the people in Parliament", Tone now gave priority to a struggle with the British empire. 21 His argument against the British empire in the address is based on two different ideologies. The first is regionalistic nationalism, which he first advanced in 1791. He attributes the subjugation and backwardness of Ireland to the prevailing absentee system not only of landlords, but of King, Lords and MPs, and claimed

19 Tone, Life I, p.55.
20 Elliott, Wolfe Tone, p.311f.
21 Tone, "Reasons why the question of parliamentary reform has always failed in the Irish legislature", Life I, p.493.
that those who did not have "a foot of property" in Ireland were incapable of securing the national interests, because, they had "no common interest with the people". This criticism of the empire still stands within the framework of fundamental constitutionalism. The second is a condemnation of the actual regime as the outcome of unjust usurpation in past times, and a claim that alteration of it depended not on negotiation, but on power. He observed: "the fact and truth is, that the great bulk of the aristocracy of Ireland, conscious that their estates were originally acquired by the most unjustifiable means, either by open robbery, sword in hand, or by the more infamous pillage of the laws"; hence, they felt that Ireland was "a foreign colony, depending entirely for their existence on the connection with England, whose power alone secure them in possession of their usurpation". Then, he declared: "It is vain to argue with men under the influence of so extreme a fear".  

The address, of course, is not a conventional pamphlet, but a document written for distribution by an invading force on arrival in Ireland. Hence, Tone, in composing it, had to meet the requirement of his French allies, who expected their forces on arrival to be joined by the people in Ireland, responding to the clarion call of the address. It was intended to stimulate retaliation and revenge among people, in contrast to the domestic writings by liberal radicals like Sampson, which seriously tried to remove those sentiments and fear of them so as to unite the whole nation. Indeed, this address stands out as the exception in the many contemporary writings sympathetic to the United Irish movement. Its argument reveals a remarkable deviation from liberal radicalism. Although the liberal radicals saw the actual constitution and laws as transplanted by the British government, they did not put them aside, but tried to illustrate how far from the British constitution the Irish one was, by which the Irish had suffered injustice. That is to say, in the name of the constitution they accused the actual constitution of injustice. Their efforts to bring an accusation against the British government on behalf of the people of Ireland continued in the Northern Star and the Press in later years. Without this kind of mediation, the power struggle in colonised countries easily falls into retaliation and revenge by force. In the Catholic emancipation campaign, Tone himself, aware of this danger, had first openly appealed to the public to grant Catholics the fundamental civil right of legal action for the reason that the right would enable them to recover their damages under colonisation not by force but law.  

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22 Tone, An Address..., p. 8-13.
23 I have discussed this point in Chapter 6.
a deep rift in the inhabitants of Ireland, found the only cement of the nation in the ideal of the British constitution ("the ancient Constitution"). Hence, he was very sensitive about the implications of undoing unfair measures taken by the government. Furthermore, he judged in 1792 that it should be more expedient and easier in the actual state of Ireland to restore the ancient constitutional rights than to newly establish the natural rights of men. 

Even after the Fitzwilliam affair, he still remained devoted to national union. However, the political situation on the Continent changed his view. He reversed the judgment, wrongly assuming the existence of union of the Irish nation, at the very moment that the union was in danger of collapse by the alarm caused by imminent French invasion. Appealing to the nation to establish a new constitution, he claimed that, unless the independence of the Irish nation was recognised and the government organised by the nation, Ireland in practice would not possess a constitution. 

This claim contrasted with the actual political context in Ireland, where almost every liberal pamphleteer was desperately spreading propaganda for political reform as a claim on behalf of the whole nation, with intent to secure the national union from the danger of a civil war.

Tone’s personal position as a party in France to negotiations for the dispatch of a French force, and his difficult position of reconciling the needs of two masters (the “domestic” views of his Irish associates and himself and those of the United Irishmen’s French allies whose perspectives were French and “republican”) account for the inconsistency or conflict within the address as well as between it and writing in Ireland. When he was asked by the French Directory in March 1796 to prepare two manifestos: one for an expedition to England, the other to Ireland, he showed an awareness of the serious gap between the Directory and himself. Convinced of the promise made by the Girondin emissaries, Jackson and Oswald, he saw the Directory as an ally of the Irish nation merely for the latter’s liberation from the British empire. Not only Tone but also O’Connor took such a position, believing in Edward Fitzgerald’s plan, which originated in his talks with Paine in November 1792. Although that plan was a mere outcome of Fitzgerald’s overestimation of the Irish Volunteers as a revolutionary force and Paine’s idealistic internationalism, it was taken up by the then Girondin government, and ironically was made seem more realistic by the prosecution’s revelation of the scheme in the Jackson trial. Tone’s purpose was to use the Directory as a guardian of freedom of nations, as a source of military aid to the Irish nation on the occasion of its resistance to British troops. The Directory, on the other hand, saw Ireland as a useful link to its strategy in its war with the British empire. Tone sought to wiggle out of this

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24 On this point, see Chapter 6.
25 Tone, An Address..., p.6.
dilemma by refusing to write the manifesto for the expedition to England as it represented foreign interference in England, and by his belief or illusion that the Irish expedition force rested on a treaty made on an equal footing between Ireland and France. This point was very important not only for Tone but for O'Connor to justify themselves against the stigma of treasonable rebellion. As mentioned in the previous chapter, O'Connor voiced the same assertion as Tone in 1799. 28

Tone's dilemma was heightened by the connotation of "republican" which differed in Humean discourse and in the situation of republican France. In Humean constitutionalism, "republican" meant a certain form of government, and the government of Britain and Ireland was seen as the mixture of republican and monarchical forms. Since the checks and balances of power were seen as essential for the guarantee of freedom, both the purely republican form and the mixed one were considered to be capable for securing freedom despite the difference in their system. On the other hand, in France, "republican" meant a political principle, connoting democracy, liberty, revolution, a new era and France. By the same token, in the French context "monarchy" carried connotations of monopoly, oppression, conservatism, an old regime and England (the British empire). Accordingly, the confrontation between England and France was identified with that between monarchism and republicanism. Within this framework, opposition to England was to be understood as pro-French and republican. Here, what in the eyes of constitutionalism seemed to be three theoretically different issues: the form of the government (republicanism), political principle (the cause of democracy) and external politics (the cause of nationalism) were mixed together. Hence, it is not surprising that Tone, a man of liberal constitutionalism, driven into this dualistic ideological framework in exile in France, was thrown into confusion by this quite problematic identification. Although he portrayed the domestic political situation as the confrontation between aristocracy and democracy in his memorials submitted to the Directory in February 1796, by "democracy" he simply meant fair representation in the Commons in the mixed form of government. 27 For him, republicanism (in the sense of republican government) was desirable, but not an essential requisite for the separation from England. Indeed, the advocacy of republicanism was a possible impediment to the union of the Irish nation, because, as I have pointed out in the earlier parts of this paper, the most prevalent claim of independence of Ireland was grounded on the sovereignty of the Crown of Ireland, not that of the people. His accusation directed not against the Monarch himself but against the absenteeism of the

28 See, Chapter 8, p.213.
27 Tone, Life II, p.181-204.
Irish monarch from Ireland shows that his argument for the separation still presupposed a constitutional monarchy.

On the other hand, the Directory expected Tone and other Irish activists in France to establish a republic allied with France like other newly established republics on the Continent, and asked Tone to propagate republicanism in Ireland. Although this expectation was quite natural for their political and ideological situation, it gave rise to serious discord with Tone. Faced with a frustrating conflict of ideas, he met the Directory halfway. The Address to the People... was a product of this compromise. The issue, however, had not been settled. When O'Connor went over to Paris between the beginning of June and August and entered into a secret treaty with Hoche, the problem again came to the surface, at least to Tone’s mind. O’Connor, nimble enough to iron out the difference of opinion from the Directory, agreed to establish a new republic in Ireland. As far as this agreement is concerned, his conduct can be seen either as duplicity, or as reflecting Fitzgerald’s adherence to republicanism, because O’Connor himself even later never publicly advocated republicanism. In this way, the French expedition was based on an agreement between O’Connor and Hoche.

Finally, in passing, a few words should be added about O’Connor’s position. If he is placed in the republican strand of the United Irishmen, that does not of itself imply that his political thought was within the framework of French republicanism. Although he agreed in the negotiation with Hoche to establish a republican government, this compromise was not reflected in his writings. There is a possibility that O’Connor had read Tone’s draft of the Address to the People... in Paris before he wrote the First Address to the Free Electors..., because a phrase of Tone’s pamphlet is echoed in O’Connor’s first address. Tone said: “in Ireland it [i.e. the Constitution] is so smothered beneath a mass of corruption, as to be, in effect, no more the Constitution of England, as it exists in the theory, than it is the Constitution of Constantinople or Japan”. O’Connor said: “laws fit for the meridian [i.e. meridian] of Turkey or of Japan have been passed”. However, in his argument at large O’Connor confined himself to criticising the government on the principle of the British constitution. The State of Ireland written or at least completed in early 1798 seems to confirm the inner -and domestic- consistency of his thought. The dealings of Tone and O’Connor alike with the French government reflect the dilemma of radicals in their positions not only as exiles but as supplicants: the task of reconciling the language of argument and justice and that of power and force.

28 Tone, An Address..., p.7.
29 Arthur O’Connor, The First Address to the Free Electors of the County of Antrim, 22 October 1796.
9.3 Outside the Pale of Constitutionalism: the Anti-imperialism and Radical Democracy of Thomas Russell: 1796

Thomas Russell’s radical democracy and anti-imperialism show us the existence of another strand of radicalism in the United Irishmen. He was the most reliable friend of Tone, and a collaborator of Sampson in the *Northern Star*. Unlike his associates, however, his view did not stem from British constitutionalism. His background accounts for this difference. He was a military man and had been in India, where he was wounded. Instead of awareness of liberal principles of the Constitution, he knew the dark side of the British empire by his experience in India. His experience and his civic humanism, articulated by the language of Painite radical democracy, aroused a righteous indignation, which became his criterion for social criticism. It was Russell who first introduced a strand of anti-imperialism into the United Irish movement. Under his influence, both Tone and Sampson came to realise the colonisation and subjugation of the Irish nation by British imperialism. Russell published *A Letter to the People of Ireland* in September 1796. In the pamphlet, he openly asserted that “foreign and extrinsick [sic] power, which could at any time crush the whole nation” and “want of military resources in the people” had contributed toward preserving aristocratic oligarchy in Ireland. In his view, it was not only the unjust policy of the British government but its overwhelming military strength which had caused the subjection of other provinces within the British empire, including Ireland, to England.  

Hence, he thought that, unless the Irish nation took measures to withstand such a military power, there was no possibility of effecting its liberation. His familiarity with the British army enabled him to find a deceptively peaceable and feasible remedy against this situation. He remarked: “It has been calculated that near one-third of the seamen in the British navy are Irish”. In the large proportion of Irish soldiers in the British armed forces, he found an Achilles heel of the British empire that the power of England depended upon its connection with Ireland. On this ground, he appealed to Irish soldiers to withdraw altogether from the British armies to obtain a bloodless victory. By the same token, he foresaw that, once England lost access to the human and natural resources of Ireland, its power would weaken not only militarily but politically and economically. He observed: “[I]f Ireland, instead of being neutral in any contest (particularly the present) in which England was engaged, was hostile, the commercial pre-eminence of England, on which her political power is founded, would not be eclipsed, but

31 Ibid., p.21.
extinguished". 2 This point was echoed in Tone’s *An Address...* with more emphasis. It says: “Who are they, who man her [i.e. England] vessels? TWO THIRDS OF THEM ARE IRISHMEN. ... will they ... be ready to turn their arms against their native land?” 3

Russell’s social view reveals a significant difference from the liberal constitutionalist concept of civilised commercial society. He did not have the notion of progress of society towards a commercial stage. On the contrary, he dismissed commerce as exploitation of the fruits of productive labour. He said: “[T]he rich men (those whose wealth arises from commerce expected) derive their wealth from the labours of the poor”. By the same token, he criticised the landed interests for their unearned income, rents. He remarked: “The possession of land without cultivators is of no value to a man, except so much as could support himself ... Agriculture is the basis of all riches, commercial as well as others; the earth was given to man by him who alone had a right to give it, for his subsistence”. 4 His emphasis on the importance of agriculture is quite close to Paine’s arguments. Paine in *The Rights of Man* took a physiocratical view: “Every individual, high or low, is interested in the fruits if the earth; ... No other interest in a nation stands on the same united support. Commerce, manufacture, arts, sciences, and everything else, compared with this, are supported but in part”. 5 Moreover, in *Agrarian Justice*, Paine claimed that it is not the land itself but cultivation which forms the value of landed property, he said: "Man did not make the earth, and, though he had a natural right to occupy it, he had no right to locate as his property in perpetuity any part of it”. 6 On the same ground, Russell, against those who vilified and despised the poor peasantry, justified their political participation as the cultivators produced the real value of land. He also argued for their participation in tax payment, was greater than that of the rich in the “proportion which each pays according to his income”. 7

Russell made a further case against the wars the British empire had pursued. Inspired by Paine’s *Decline of English System of Finance*, whose Dublin edition was published in 1796, many arguments against the ongoing war stressed swelling national debts and taxes. 8 Although Russell as well criticised wars, his emphasis was placed on their exploitative and oppressive impact on the colonised peoples, rather than the disadvantages to the British nation:

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[S]upposing ... that by the war prosperity and affluence, sufficient to satiate avarice, was brought home to every individual of the nation; still, if the war was unjust, this wealth would only be the fruits of robbery and murder. ... If the English, or any other people, think gold a sufficient cause to shed blood, -if they they [sic] are satisfied to fill the world with carnage and misery, that they may acquire cloves, and nutmegs, and contracts, and slaves,... let it not be so with us, let justice be the rule of our conduct, and let us not,... incur the displeasure of the Deity.  

Revealing the dark side of the empire, Russell appealed to the Irish nation not to become an accomplice of British imperialism. In his view, the struggle of the Irish nation should be directed, not towards establishing an equal footing with the British nation, but towards the abolishment of the actual imperialistic system itself. He asked: “Are the Irish nation aware that this contest involves the question of the slave trade, the one now of the greatest consequence on the face of the earth? Are they willing to employ their treasure and their blood in support of that system ... ?”

From the remarks in this section, his two distinctive features become clear. The first is his internationalism, which pursued liberation of all oppressed nations under the old empires, and the second is his democracy, which claimed the political participation of the peasantry on the basis of agrarian justice. These features stand outside the pale of British constitutionalism and illustrate his Painite radicalism. His approach to anti-imperialism also differed from Tone’s. While Tone, finding an unjust and subjugating system in the British empire, claimed the independence of the Irish nation from Britain, Russell, identifying with oppressed people and nations and emotionally expecting the notion of the arrival of a new age of liberation when the old empires fell, sought to resist oppressive old power. Russell’s idea of resistance by united people can be seen as the remaining influence of Digges. Tone also was to a considerable extent attracted by this idea, as his pamphlet An Address... shows. Russell brought the strand of anti-imperialism into popular resistance by widening the views of the United Irish movement beyond Anglo-Irish relations.

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38 Russell, ibid., p.21.
40 Ibid., p.22.
Chapter 10:
TOWARDS CIVILISED SOCIETY: CRYSTALLISATION OF LIBERAL PRINCIPLES

...just so expedient is it for you to abide by the one ONLY rule of duty which can save you - THE PLAIN RULE OF JUSTICE.

William Sampson ¹

When I speak of politics, I mean that first of all sciences which consists in framing laws according to the fixed principles of human nature.

Arthur O'Connor ²

It is the chief business of philosophers to regard the general course of things. I may add, that it is also the chief business of politicians, especially in the domestic government of the state, where the public good, which is or ought to be their object, depends on the concurrence of a multitude of causes; not, as in foreign politics, on accidents and chances, and the caprices of a few persons.

David Hume ³

10.0 The Aftereffects of the French Invasion

On the arrival of a French fleet at Bantry, the Sovereign of Belfast, John Brown, summoned a full meeting of the Principal Inhabitants of Belfast on 31 December 1796. The meeting was formally opened by the Sovereign and debated whether the inhabitants should put themselves under the command of the government, and offer their "lives without condition of qualification of any kind". Then, having appointed the Sovereign, William Bristow, Arthur O'Connor, William Sampson and five other gentlemen to a committee for the preparation of resolutions, the meeting was adjourned until 2 January 1797 to "receive the Report of the Committee". ⁴ The subsequent meeting, however, was faced with troubles. First of all, since public institutes like the Exchange and the Linen Hall refused to offer a place for the meeting, participants held it on the pavement in front of the White Linen Hall. ⁵ Moreover, "the Sovereign did not appear to take the Chair", because he and William Bristow had seceded from the Committee. This situation revealed the considerable divide in public opinion in Belfast. The participants proposed that O'Connor should take the chair, but he declined. Then, instead of him, Sampson, taking the Chair, addressed the "malignant" men in the meeting who intended to disrupt the assembly. His appeal for disarmament was itself a bold action as it involved confronting members of the former Volunteer corps, who, alarmed by the threat in Bantry,

³ David Hume, "Of Commerce", in David Hume Selected Essays, p.155.
⁴ N.S., 30 Dec. 1796-2 Jan. 1797; for the debate at the meeting, Sampson's speech in N.S., 2-6 Jan. 1797; The Drennan Letters, p.247.
⁵ N.S., 2-6 Jan. 1797.
were determined to break up the meeting, and whom Sampson had to confront in order to calm them down: “Follow ... the example of those Volunteers, who adorned, preserved and civilised their country ... Stand together compacted in the firm bond of union and affection ... whatever share of the King's peace may be allowed you, keep peace amongst yourselves”. ⁶ Drennan, informed later about the proceedings of the meeting, portrayed him as “the most active, that can leap upon a joint-stool and harangue the populace”. Mrs. McTier’s comment on 13 January conveys the dilemma of such men who wanted to defend their native land:

I pity the brave and honourable man who must either decline arming against a foreign foe or swear to support the present Government. It, therefore, is all half work here, just enough to damn with either side; about a hundred have agreed to arm, many of them old vol[untee]rs, and liberal of their words. ⁷

It is not surprising that a civic obligation to defend a native land tends to mean preserving the actual regime. The confusion of nation with government led the radicals into a more awkward position than they had foreseen. As the debate on 31 December shows, Sampson and O'Connor had tried to convince people to distinguish the will of the nation from that of the existing government. Moreover, the resolutions at the meeting had no controversial contents. Warning people of the danger of “the despair of succeeding in their constitutional exertions to attain the most important object of their wishes”, they declared: “we conceive a Government by King, Lords and Commons (the Commons being thus reformed), ... capable of affording every happiness a Nation can enjoy”. ⁸ Despite these efforts, the people of Belfast was split asunder by the threat of French invasion. To confront such a situation, which was in danger of taking on the aspects of a civil war, the radicals, if they were to hold public opinion, had to launch a propaganda campaign against Government with pen and press. McTier on 13 January 1797 wrote: “Lord Edward is with him [i.e. O'Connor] .... To-morrow they are to be with Sampson. People who are with them say O'Connor is writing a book”. ⁹ This accounts for the circumstances under which O'Connor and Sampson wrote their pamphlets in 1797.

10.1 Seeking a Bridge between Liberal Radicalism and Republicanism: O'Connor's Struggle in the Aftermath of the Bantry Bay Attempt: 1797

After the withdrawal of the French fleet from Bantry Bay in December 1796, O'Connor published the Second address to the free electors of the County of

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⁶ N.S., 2-6 Jan. 1797.
⁷ The Drennan Letters, p.247.
⁸ N.S., 30 Dec. 1796-2 Jan. 1797.
⁹ The Drennan Letters, p.247.
Antrim dated 20 January. In the address, O'Connor denounced both Irish domestic factions and the administration as invaders, and appealed to people not to forgive under the pretext of the threat of French invasion the injustice, the crimes and oppression they had suffered. He said: “to support the worst of invasions, the invasion of RIGHTS AND OF COMMERCE, 15,000 English and Scotch have been sent to invade us already... the shambles of Germany have been resorted to, to invade us with more”. With the intent of leading inhabitants to distinguish the loyalty and duty to their native land from those to Britain, he requested the Protestant inhabitants to decide whether they would join the union of Irishmen without respect to their own religious sect and Anglo-Irish background, or, recruited by the Yeoman corps, would become the descendants of those invaders. Criticising the defence policy of the British administration for disarming the Irish nation by the Gunpowder Act, he claimed that, instead of troops from Britain, the Irish nation should be capable of defending itself. It is interesting that he referred to the example of Switzerland: when in the unanointed Republics of Swiss, they can defy the invasion of Germany, of France, and Sardinia, those warlike and powerful nations by which they are bounded, by that law which OBLIGES every Citizen from 18 to 60 years old, to be provided with arms, why cannot Ireland defy the whole world by a like OBLIGATION.

This comment shows us not only his claim of the right of self-defence, but at the same time his favourable attitude towards the purely “secular” republican system.

Up to this, he had never mentioned republicanism. But, in this address, he tried to crystallise a republican strand out of the principles of the British constitution. He argued that people had been constitutionally authorised to give permission for the King, Lords and Commons to exist, and to approve the King’s swearing “the first oath of allegiance ... from the King to the Laws, the Constitution and People”. Despite apparent similarity of this argument to the Lockean contract theory, the ground justifying people recalling their trust to the government is not breach of contract, but their judgment of the expediency of a monarchy. Concerning the King and MPs, he said: “if useful, their titles can never be questioned, if not, they can never be bolstered by swearing”. While seeing the King as merely a functional branch of the constitution, O’Connor avoided an outward call to abolish the monarchy. Instead, his target was the feudalistic notion of loyalty to the King, which had been the ideological root of subjugation of Ireland to England. He said: “[I]t is not in nature that Ireland can be longer held by the disgraceful and ruinous vassalage by which she is bound”.

O’Connor was also aware of the danger of imperialistic foreign interference under the pretext of fraternity. Sardonically referring to the

10 Arthur O’Connor, The second address to the free electors of the county of Antrim (1797, Dublin).
“fraternity” among nations, he said: “I will not compare the systems of fraternity in the East or West Indies, adopted by England and France”. He tried to lead people to avoid the alternatives of a pro-Britain or pro-France stance, which the government had been propagating. He declared: “I will neither be conquered by England or France; nor are we any more bound to a disadvantageous alliance to one than we are to the other. ... if it is more the true interest of Ireland to form an alliance with France than with England, she is free to adopt it”. This meant a demand for the restoration of the national rights of self-defence and diplomacy, the loss of which had been a crucial defect of sovereignty. At this stage, O’Connor, claiming the national right of self-defence, advocated organising the nation into an independent self-defence body, which was expected to virtually form a nucleus of a republican strand of the constitution.

10.2 A Radicalised Liberal Strand of the British Constitutionalism: William Sampson 1796-1797

By an order of the Privy Council, O’Connor was arrested for this address on 2 February 1797, and imprisoned for six months. During his imprisonment, it was William Sampson who played a key role in the political propaganda of the United Irish movement. The year before, he published An Advice to the Rich, which had originally appeared in the Northern Star. While anonymously contributing to the Northern Star, he had, as a liberal lawyer, made efforts to champion human rights at the bar. Claiming the liberal principles of the British constitution, he confronted the forces of reaction. His satire highlighted the injustice the British empire had committed in the past and was committing at that time.

In An Advice to the Rich, Sampson showed how Ireland had suffered injustice every time revolution had broken out in England: Ireland had been called upon to defend the actual regime in the name of its allies on whom its “treasure had been lavished”, and, once a new regime was established, it was just stigmatized as an accomplice of the old ruler by the new and then penalised. Referring to the contemporary revolutionary situation, he wrote that, while Ireland had only “a project of bankruptcy and civil war”, those nations who had effected revolutions “acquired glory, dominion, alliances, territory, freedom, and unanimity” in the end, not only within the British empire but in France. Denouncing magistrates [i.e. justices of the peace] as unjust, he ironically remarked that the “said Justices” are empowered to “send on board ships of

11Sampson, ibid., p.7f.
12Ibid., p.17.
battle, such men as they find out of their habitations after sun-set” and “to shoot the natives”. 13 His irony illustrating how Ireland was at the mercy of lawless men in the name of the law was an effort to convince the middle class that was in their real interest to stick by their country and effect a reform of political abuses, as they would “have less to contribute to the public expenditure when regulated with oeconomy”. 14 Sampson’s argument for reform rested not only on the principle of justice but on that of expediency and prosperity of the nation. He saw reform, by which he meant satisfaction of a constitutional claim of justice, as the most expedient remedy for the actual crisis: “I know of nothing which can compose this country but the one -and that is, the dreadful expedient of REFORM: much as it may be abhorred, and fearful as it may be, it is the only remedy”. 15

Sampson, pointing out the deliberate infringement of the right of self-defence of the Irish nation by British defensive measures, uncovered the colonialism of the British empire, which had been hidden under the pretext of the union between the sister kingdoms. He asked readers to suppose that “by means of a strange soldiery and standing army, a despotism” was “established and “cemented by a COLONIAL UNION WITH ENGLAND”. 16 As to the oath of the Yeoman corps, which the government sought to organise, he remarked that it “might be strained to any approbation of the present system”. 17 Describing the miseries of colonial subjugation, he sought to persuade people to pin their hopes of liberation on a united national campaign for reform, lining up with the just and fair principles of the British constitution:

I should be weak and arrogant, if I expected to argue the crafty pensioner out of his legalised pelf, or persuade the peculator to give up his authorised plunder - I have no such hope: yet, notwithstanding, I do think that the observations I have submitted to you, may not be useless, even to those classes, in the regulation of their present conduct, as even to them the difference might be extreme, between the mild changes and modifications effected by a timely and salutary reform, and those resulting from an angry revolution, in which vengeance and retaliation will assume the tone of justice. 18

Sampson’s discussion of the maintenance of justice must be looked at carefully. He distinguishes two actual modes of maintenance of justice: one is “timely and salutary”, namely expedient, adjustment; the other is an overturn in a naked power struggle of the domineering strong by the weak. Although the latter mode might actualise social justice, society would not remain civilised; it would go back to the savage stage, where there is no mediation by the law. In

13 Ibid., p.22.
15 Ibid., p.24.
16 Ibid., p.20.
17 Ibid., p.24f.
18 Ibid., p.13.
his view, timely adjustments, which should take shape in the course of political
discussion about social issues, were requisites for maintaining a civilised society.
Hence, he argued that innovation does not necessarily involve the violent storm
of social disorder; it is the stubborn resistance of the dominant class to any
reform and innovation which leads people to resort to extreme measures:
If you drive men to desperation - if you rouse their souls by insult and oppression - if you
irritate them by a wanton abuse of power, exercised for shameful purposes, by unworthy
hands - and that in the conflict for their liberty, they risk their lives, their property, their
peace, and all the endearment of domestic tranquillity, whilst you, upon whom it lay, to have
averted all these evils - whose interest and honour should have led you hand in hand. 19

As the title of this pamphlet shows, he raised the question of the rich and
poor. His argument was intended to restrain the lower people’s expectation of
levelling. Sampson tried to convince people that the social justice the reform
campaign had pursued was different from the claim of levelling. As to an
equalisation of property, he clearly said: “If ever such a notion has prevailed, it
must have been amongst the poorest and also the ignorant classes”. 20 Alluding
to the Montagnard government, he bitterly criticised its members. He
portrayed their conduct as “the attempts of a few rash and arrogant men ... to
change the laws of nature and of nature’s God ... by their crude improvident
decrees, breathing nothing but their own ignorance, treachery, venom and
cowardice”. 21 The bitterness of this criticism reminds us of Burke’s argument
against the French revolution. However, this point should not be understood as
a pointer to a limitation in his degree of radicalism. It was the ideological
circumstance at that time which led him to this corrosive criticism.

In those days, agrarianism was becoming an issue with its notions which
had gone through several transformations. Agrarianism originated in classical
republicanism, because republicanism in theory at least required a balance of
property among citizens so as to even the political power of each individual.
Hence, agrarianism was initially put on the agenda for the maintenance of the
republican polity by French republicans. However, in the course of its
popularisation, this agrarianism became mixed up with the premodern
millenarian agrarianism of so called levellers. In Britain, anti-Jacobin
propaganda by the government in the wartime against republican France,
sought to confound republicanism and mass democracy with millenarian
agrarianism, with the intent of deterring the middle class from supporting the
reform campaign. Confronting this tendency, Paine published Agrarian Justice
in Britain in 1797, to criticise a sermon preached by Richard Watson, which was
“entitled: The Wisdom and Goodness of God, in having made both Rich and

19 Ibid., p.19.
20 Ibid., p.32.
21 Ibid., p.18f.
Poor". In opposing Watson, Paine carefully distinguished his idea of social justice in landholding in civilised society (namely, agrarian justice) from classical agrarianism. Although, denying the statement that God made rich and poor, he accepted the notion of equality in a natural state, he realised that the notion cannot justify the economic equalisation in a civilised state, in which the earth had been cultivated. Advocating the right of all those without landed property to access the land for cultivation, he at the same time declared:

I have entitled this tract 'Agrarian Justice' to distinguish it from 'Agrarian Law'. Nothing could be more unjust than agrarian law in a country improved by cultivation; for though every man, as an inhabitant of the earth, is a joint proprietor of it in its natural state, it does not follow that he is a joint proprietor of cultivated earth. The additional value made by cultivation, after the system was admitted, became the property of those who did it, or who inherited it from them, or who purchased it.

This phrase shows us Paine's struggle to draw the line between his liberal radicalism and millenarian agrarianism. In practice some evidence of the two strands existed among the lower class in Ireland.

In these ideological circumstances, Sampson saw the deluded masses and political convulsion in revolutionary France as essentially a deviation from the inevitable process of political innovation, in the way some modern revisionist historians consider it as a dérapage. Then, he suggested redressing the balance between the rich and the poor, not on the ground of the right of equality, but of social justice:

Let the rich, ... come forward and honestly insist, whilst yet they dare do it, upon immediate justice to the poor and to themselves -and then they may bid defiance to all such fears; for by blending their interest with the poor, making a common cause with them, ... they will leave no breach for dissention to enter at.

He based social justice on the more expedient maintenance of society. Paine, seeing the political adjustment of the difference between the poor and the rich as a requisite for keeping society "civilised", argued that adjustment through taxation would produce a common interest and happiness for society as a whole. Moreover, Hume thought that laws and rights should be grounded on and justified by actual needs for the maintenance of society, not on the basis of a simple deduction from natural rights. Sampson likewise argued that it was a more expedient policy for the rich to take account of the interest of the poor to avoid increased hatred and jealousy among the latter than to neglect it;

23 Ibid., p.477.
25 On this point, see Chapter 1, p.8f.
26 Ibid., p.33.
because, otherwise, war would break out between the two, and ruin the property of the rich. Without well-timed political redress of indignation among people on the principle of social justice, civilised society would easily fall into a savage one. In the eyes of Sampson, Ireland was in this danger.

Sampson considered that it was crucial to build a new system enabling the nation to redress social evil by forming a national consensus through a constitutionally fair and just political process. In this respect, he commented favourably on France, for the reason that it formed a new political system which had a built-in device for self-correction. He remarked that, although "a system of terror" had occurred in France, it was quite "shortlived and destructive to its authors", because France "had once heard the sound of liberty". Compared with this, the Irish system had so long time lost the function of checks against deviations from constitutional principles. He found the most critical defect of the actual system in the unfair and unjust representation of MPs. He observed: "The evils are these - that neither persons nor property are represented as they ought; that the Commons representing depopulated boroughs, and the lacquies of Lords are no more the representatives of the people of Ireland, than of the people of Japan". This wording was to be echoed in O'Connor's address, in which he satirically said that recently the laws "Tit for the meredian [sic] of Turkey or of Japan" had "been passed" in the Irish parliament.

Sampson's cautious comment on secularisation of the Protestant constitution also conveys his "fundamental respect for the law as a moral obligation". In the way Tone in the Catholic emancipation campaign, suspending judgment on the issue of legitimacy of the Protestant constitution, had argued that the issue should be preceded by securing the necessary conditions for fair and just debate in Parliament, Sampson frankly commented upon the ecclesiastical establishment:

Whether this establishment is founded in justice, or is fit to stand the test of time and reason, I leave out of the questions. All I shall mention ..., that provided the Clergy do not prove enemies to their country, they having embarked in their profession, under the sanction of the law and the existing order of things, have a claim upon the nation for an indemnity in case of any change that may be thought generally expedient.

Sampson opposed the expectation of confiscation of church property which had been spreading among the lower class, discontented with tithes. He remarked that "the odious mode of paying clergy" was indeed "another evil"; but it would

27 Ibid., p.18.
28 Ibid., p.43.
29 To the Free Electors of the County of Antrim, October 22, 1796.
30 On this point, see p. 234.
31 Ibid., p.34.
“be best considered when government is first surely pledged to the country to make a general Reform”.² From the worsening political state, where both Dublin Castle and Parliament had been oppressing the liberty of speech by suspension of Habeas Corpus and by treating the demands for reform as treasonable, he judged the restoration of legal protection against state power as the first step which the united movement should seek urgently for the safety of people and their property.

Despite Sampson’s pursuit of fairness and justice, the government had taken a strong line against the United Irish movement. Mobilising Yeoman corps and magistrates by means of resort to newly passed legislation, it sought to destroy the Defenders, a secret organisation of Catholics. The parliament let Catholics be coerced by Yeoman corps and magistrates without legal redress. In the autumn of 1797, Sampson published another anonymous pamphlet entitled “A view of the present state of Ireland”. The passage he cited on the front page shows us the target of his righteous indignation: “The Laws! corrupted to their ends who make them, severe but as instruments of some NEW tyranny, which every day starts up to enslave us DEEPER ... A vigour [rigour] beyond the Law”. By these quotations, Sampson, denouncing the new acts passed by Parliament as wrong, decried the actual state, in which more unjust and worse laws were newly made to paper over the evils caused by the preceding unjust laws. He saw the origin of this injustice in the imperialistic measures by Government to preserve “order” by a policy of divide and rule from the time of the Volunteer reform movement in the early 1780s. He thought that the government conspiracy to divide the nation against itself had given rise to sectarian friction. “The fault did not originate with the people, but in the malepractices of ministers”, he declared.³ Moreover, he pointed out that the reign of laws as a check on authority had been weakened since the outbreak of the war with France, because the threat of French invasion had led the government to judge the Defenders as subversive and hostile, and to connive under the pretext of emergency measures at encroachment by magistrates and military corps on the constitutional rights of the nation. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, and the bill of Indemnity was passed in Parliament. He described how unjust the actual state was, in which people were being exposed to legalised violence outside the protection of the alleged free constitution: “So flagitious, illegal and unconstitutional, was the conduct of the magistracy, that

² Ibid., p.43.

³ A View of the Present State of Ireland, with an Account of the Origin and Progress of the Disturbances in that Country; and a narrative of Facts, Addressed to the People of England (2nd ed., London, 1797), p.7. Judging from the date of the most recent case the author took up (24th July), this pamphlet must have been written during the summer of 1797.
administration ... was afraid to let the atrocities which had been committed meet the public eye: and ministers procured a bill of Indemnity to be passed in parliament, to screen from punishment those officers of the peace".  
Challenging the government which saw itself as neutral and as responsible for quelling so-called disturbances, he asserted that the British government was incompetent to deal with them, because the real cause of the disturbances was it itself.

This pamphlet was planned to win support from public opinion in England, as the subtitle says: “addressed to the people of England”. Its arguments show us significant developments in the theorisation of imperialistic subjugation. The pamphlet, breaking through the traditional simple framework of independence from England, appealed to the people of England to subvert in alliance with the people of Ireland the oppressive administration of the British empire. It argued that the system on which ministers acted in Great Britain and Ireland” has “been perfectly uniform and combined” for their great object: “total extinction of liberty in the British empire”; hence, it is not only people of Ireland but also those of England who had been suffering from the same sort of oppressive laws.  

The awareness of common oppression came to form the very basis for making common cause with the people of England. However, the difference between the subjugating nation and the subjugated one cannot be reduced to people in general. Realising that the two nations differed in the degree of submission to the British government, Sampson said:

Are they [i.e. Englishmen] not convinced that the British cabinet rules the Irish nation; and that the men who have established a coercive system in the one country are capable of attempting it in the other? When a military government is erected in the provinces, Britons must in their turn submit. It will be therefore necessary for them to consider if they are willing to relinquish the TRIAL BY JURY, and to endure the cruelties resulting from martial law. ... UNITE before it is too late to obtain peaceable and radical reform in the state of representation.  

Alerting Englishmen to the dangers of on-going militarisation of the government, he found a common base of union in provision against this possible danger. By championing human rights in the “free” British constitution, he sought to lead all of those under the so-called blessings of the constitution to maintenance and restoration of “civil” government:

Is the Bill of Rights a dead letter? ... Is the boasted constitution of Britain to sleep when ever it shall answer the corrupt views of a profligate administration? Is it not the constitution of the people, without whose consent it never could have existed? It is theirs by adoption, and it is their duty, and unquestionably their right to check its vices and instill principles of virtue.  

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34 Ibid., p.10.
35 Ibid., p.16.
36 Ibid., p.34f.
37 Ibid., p.37.
It is clear from this passage that Sampson intended to form a campaign for championing the civil constitution by "peaceable and radical reform". The parliament which did not correctly represent the common people was so easily manipulated by the administration as to be incapable of checking the latter's deviation from of the constitutional principles. In this state, Sampson, who was seeking to oppose the Government's coercive policy by civil and peaceful measures, had no other choice but to seek the fall of Pitt's Administration by uniting various reform societies and organisations both in Britain and in Ireland. He observed:

Corresponding Societies, the Whig Club, and the Friends of the People, all declare that their great object is reform; but this they have not been able to obtain, because their efforts have always been divided; and until UNION is completely established they cannot hope for success. 38

His idea of a united popular campaign for reform can be seen as a prototype of modern grass-roots social movements, or people's movement. As popular movements cannot be reduced to labour movements or class-struggles, the united popular campaign in his idea should be distinguished from "mass" mobilisation or mass democracy. To describe accurately Sampson's view on rights and democracy, we must just clarify our central conception of a people's movement, in comparison with mass movements. The term "mass" has been understood as unspecified individuals especially of the lower class. This broad definition deprives the term of a stress on the active exercise of right as a legal counter power in given situations. It suggests weight of numbers. On the other hand, the term "people" implies the individuals in variously contextualised situations, in which they counter a certain "wrong" power by exerting their own legitimatized power, namely rights. If Government itself is the wrong power, the number of those who are expected to counter it must be vast. Nevertheless, they should be called people, not the masses, as long as each of them counters the government in their own specified situation. Sampson considered political rights as an inherent authority to counter or on occasion to protest at the unfairness, injustice and wrong which each individual suffers. In contrast with the advocates of reform of the seventeen-eighties like John Cartwright, who demanded "Give us our Rights!", Sampson, a liberal radical of the nineties, put the emphasis not on a claim to enfranchisement itself, but on an appeal to people to voice a protest against the government's wrong policy, if they saw themselves as deserving of those rights. He said: "They [the people] possess the right of remonstrance; in them exists an inherent right of reformation; right derived from nature, the holy gift of God, which no human authority can destroy

38 Ibid., p.40.
They are the inalienable rights of man”. This understanding of rights as fundamental power to contend or litigate shows us the influence of Locke’s concept of right of resistance. Locke describes the right as a supreme power which “remains still in the People ... to remove or alter the Legislative, when they find the Legislative act contrary to the trust reposed in them”. Moreover, it was seen as “not only a Right to get out of” Tyranny “but to prevent it”.

Locke’s discourse on a liberal principle of resistance goes further to a fundamental right of self-determination of justice. Supposing the situation in which “the Body of the People, or any single Man, is deprived of their Right, or is under the Exercise of a power without right, and have no Appeal on Earth”, Locke claims that

tho’ the People cannot be Judge, so as to have by the Constitution of that Society any Superior power, to determine and give effective Sentence in the case; yet they have, by a Law antecedent and paramount to all positive Laws of men, reserv’d that ultimate Determination to themselves, which belongs to all Mankind, ... to judge whether they have just Cause to make their Appeal to Heaven.

Sampson’s notion of an inherent right of reformation coincides with the concept of right of resistance as mentioned above. By claiming the injustice of “justice of the peace” on sufficient evidence in the pamphlet, he tried to show that the actual state of Ireland was that in which people “have no Appeal on Earth”, and justify the exertion of right of resistance. By the same token, he appealed to people to maintain a critical attitude towards political leaders. He declared: “fortunately for the welfare and happiness of mankind, the infatuation of looking up to particular men, or particular names, is going out of fashion. The people will shortly feel that must trust to themselves alone, and assert their own cause”. This passage clearly tells us his principle of participatory democracy based on a fundamental right of self-determination of justice.

In the last few paragraphs of the pamphlet, Sampson presented two significant principles: one was union for a common purpose and interest, which makes people converge upon a specified movement, the other is participatory democracy, which makes people diverge from one another and dissolve into specified individuals. These principles are those which modern radical democracy has pursued. In this sense, his claim should not be portrayed simply as that of “mass” democracy.

This pamphlet, however, reflects a difference from the strategy of the United Irishmen in its later stage. Some members, in exile in France, giving

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39 Ibid., p.37.
40 John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, p.367.
41 Ibid., p.411.
42 Ibid., p.379f.
43 A View of the Present State of Ireland, p.40.

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priority to independence from Britain, were preparing for a further French expedition to support the uprising of people in Ireland. On the other hand, Sampson in the pamphlet sought to make common cause with reform societies in Britain "to obtain peaceable and radical reform". His explanation of the Societies of United Irishmen also strongly emphasised their "moral and strictly constitutional" nature:

The [i.e. the United Irishmen] therefore associated for the purpose of promoting an union throughout the kingdom, as the only possible means by which they could hope to obtain Catholic emancipation, and a radical reform in parliament - measures best calculated to alleviate the sufferings of the people, and by which alone their liberty and happiness could be permanently secure.

Sampson repeatedly announced that, although the Society had adopted some new "systemised plan" since 1795, it was nothing but the system of union "for the purpose of obtaining A RADICAL REFORM IN THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE". Then, blaming the secret committee of the House of Lords for seeing the united Irish movement as resistance, he argued that people indeed have a right of resistance against unconstitutional attacks upon their rights, but their direct counterattack would be also unconstitutional and "contrary to the principles of their association ... An union of affection and political sentiment was the great means by which they hoped to make a just impression on the constituted authorities". National independence is clearly omitted from his explanation. This point, however, should not be understood as simply a maneuver by him. He intended to use the rights of freedom the British constitution had secured as a shield from the coercion of Government at that moment. Furthermore, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, his familiarity with the political situation in the North made him judge that national union should precede independence. As he reported in his pamphlet, he was well-informed about the legally authorised barbarous attacks on Catholic inhabitants in Armagh on the pretext for eradicating the Defenders by the roots. Hence, he was under the apprehension that the actual situation was in danger of falling into a civil war, if Catholics, allied with French troops, confronted the Orangemen, the Yeoman militia and British troops.

Here, we can find the most complex problem the independence campaigns of colonised nations had always faced. When radical leaders of the United Irishmen called for the union of the Irish nation, by the term "the Irish nation" they meant all of the inhabitants in Ireland who had been subordinated to Britain. Hence, neglecting actual sectarian boundary inside the nation, they

"Ibid., p.19.
"Ibid., p.16.
"Ibid., p.18f..
"Ibid., p.32f.
found the real enemy outside. In peacetime, although the boundary indeed formed dominating-dominated relations inside the nation, it did not necessarily cause conflicts. However, once Britain was declared to be the outside enemy, the boundary turned to a hostile one and divided the nation into two: those who took the Irish side, or who took the British side. Then, in practice, one part of the nation became more hostile to the other. Even if the relation between the two might be reversed by civil war, the fundamental problem cannot be resolved. Unless the political framework of multiple subjugation (namely, the existence of dominating-dominated relations inside the subjugated) itself is changed, the nation cannot be liberated. This calamity had befallen not only Ireland but other colonised nations. How many nations of them have managed to rid themselves of this worst framework set by imperialism? With the intent of avoiding a civil war, Sampson tried to unite people by leading them to change the actual Protestant constitution into a democratic and secularised one.

Despite the danger of a split of the nation at the beginning of 1797, the political situation in the first half of 1797 was favourable for the radicals to rebuild the united national movement on the basis of fundamental constitutionalism. The rejection of the Whig’s motion on reform in May led to Edward Fitzgerald, Valentine Brown Lawless -future second Lord Cloncurry- and O’Connor -in prison- proposing withdrawal from Parliament. On 15 May, Grattan accepted the proposal. This proposal meant a demonstrative action, which was intended to stir up public opinion both in Ireland and in England. The expectation of the fall of the Pitt Administration and of peace with France prompted the radicals to form an alliance with Foxite Whigs and British radicals, and Irish radical participating in meetings, north and south, to call for the downfall of the ministry during April and May. A View of... published in London seems to fit into the continuation of this campaign and its Irish-English interface. Furthermore, a detailed description of atrocities and irregularities in the first section of the pamphlet is parallel to a theme which was taken up by the Whigs in parliamentary debates. For instance, in his parliamentary speech on 23 March 1797, Fox observed:

The remedies applied tended to foment the evil. The authority of the laws was superseded.... It was thought a point of the first necessity, to prevent the people who were the objects of jealousy from procuring arms.... Such, however, has been considered the extent of the danger, that a rigour beyond any former measure, has been employed in disarming the people. Furthermore, alluding to the United Irishmen, he said: “I know, however, that

\*\*\* 2nd earl of Cloncurry, Valentine Brown Lawless, Personal Recollections of the Life and Times, with extracts from the correspondence, of Valentine Lord Cloncurry (Dublin, 1850), p.54.

\*\*\* Report of Debates in the House of Commons of Ireland, session 1796-7... to which are annexed debates in the British Parliament upon Mr Fox’s motion, touching the state of Ireland (Dublin, 1797), p.215f..
there are some who are free from any apprehension of danger to government from an union of different religious parties, and who imagine that old prejudices will form an insuperable bar to such a union."  

As to the authorship of the pamphlet, the pamphlet has been attributed to James Coigley by Réamonn O Muiri. However, a detailed statement of infringement of human rights in the first half of the pamphlet and a sophisticated constitutional argument does not accord with Coigley's argument for justification of his conduct in his autobiography. It has striking parallels with the Belfast resolutions on 2 January 1797. In the resolutions, reform of "the imperfect state of the representation in the House of Commons" was seen as the only remedy for restoring social tranquillity, and the mixed government (constitutional monarchy) was accepted as "capable of affording every happiness a nation can enjoy". Sampson and O'Connor played an important role in drafting the resolutions. Although the fifth resolution, which said "we are ready, if permitted by government, to arm in like manner as the volunteers", represents the demand by O'Connor and Fitzgerald for the right of national defence, other resolutions convey Sampson's fundamental constitutionalism and civilian tendency. If the constitutional argument for the national movement in Ireland in the pamphlet is not far removed in quality from the arguments by O'Connor, the agreement between the two men at the Belfast meeting accounts for this concordance. O'Connor and Sampson wrote in the context of an imminent general election and of the alliance with the Whigs, which was mirrored in Moira's interest in the Irish cause and in the views of other Whigs in the British parliament. Moreover, the pursuit of this alliance was to be evident at O'Connor's trial in the following year, in the support of Irish and English Whigs, which was itself in some respects a showpiece of the Whig alliance and the end of their mirage of discrediting the government.

10.3 Continuation of Wartime Coercion and the Sharpened Cause of Anti-imperialism
While Sampson was advocating united reform campaigns in both kingdoms to champion the human rights the British constitution had secured, O'Connor began to issue The Press in September 1797. Valentine Lawless was

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50 Ibid., p.216.
53 N.S., 30 Dec. 1796-2 Jan. 1797.
The events of the summer of 1797—the failure of the Whigs to bring about the fall of the government, the consequent continuation of war, arrests cumulatively increased the threat to the radicals—made them either shift in opinion or forced them to speak more openly. The postscript of the first issue shows us his awareness of the urgent necessity to separate from the British empire. This meant a notable change in O'Connor’s view on the merits and demerits of being governed by the British empire. As mentioned in Chapter 8, O’Connor had once seen the British connection as still useful for civilisation and modernisation in Ireland. Specifically, he had expected liberal MPs in the Opposition of the British parliament to have a desirable influence on Ireland. After his arrest and imprisonment between February and the beginning of August in 1797, he came to articulate a picture of structural exploitation by the British empire, which was to be discussed more comprehensively in *The State of Ireland* in the following year. Some of the aims of *The Press* show that the target of O’Connor’s criticism turned from the “Irish” monopoly to the “British”. It said:

to class Ireland on the scale of Nations, and to give her an Imperial place in the map of Europe; to assert and obtain her commercial rights, so flagrantly encroached on by British monopoly; to inculcate those maxims of economy and liberty, without which no nation can be grand or respectable; to open new channels for industry, and the employ of our people in manufactures and in commerce, in our fisheries and our collieries, those mines of wealth which, in complaisance to the sister—or rather mistress nation, are doomed to continue unworked.  

O’Connor, attributing the backwardness of Ireland to “the British monopoly”, came to conceive that it was indispensable for progress in Ireland to get rid of the British monopoly. Hence, *The Press* was edited along the lines of accusation against various evils of the British empire, and its demand for political reform was less central than in Sampson’s pamphlet. The aim of *The Press* was “finally, if it be not too presumptuous, or a project utterly impracticable, to procure a reform in the abuses of government, which are crying and manifold”.  

Furthermore, the war situation, which O’Connor judged to be progressing towards the victory of France, also led him to the decision that immediate breakaway from the empire should precede the reform of the domestic system. The postscript to the first issue of *The Press* remarked: “there is a material difference in the situation of two countries [i.e. Ireland and England] as they stand circumstanced in the torrent of French victory”. While the great body of people of England had some interest in their native land, it went on, those of Ireland had no interest, because there were “not many so far above absolute

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54 Cloncurry, ibid., p.48.  
55 *The Press*, no.1, 28 September, 1797.  
56 Ibid..
poverty as to have any thing worth defending". Moreover, it argued that the actual regime, not representing natives, had nothing worth defending; those governing Ireland had "an interest to take care of separated from, and possibly incompatible with that of the country they govern"; namely, they would involve Ireland in "the bloody scenes of confusion" produced by war with France, lest England should lose, "her right arm", Ireland. For Ireland, however, such a situation meant that "it might lose her own life, or come off exhausted with convulsions and disfigured by scars". Then, it blamed the government for generating serious division by legally restricting the exertion of the right of self-defence to Protestants. Although O'Connor expected a self-defence organisation composed of all sects to become a core of national union, the coercive measures of the government against the Defenders not only almost destroyed the development of union between the sects, but bred the fanatically sectarian Orangemen. The postscript said:

Administration in stead of the people of all persuasions -chooses to pass by some millions of Dissenters and Catholics- and to risque the event with mercenary forces, and a few troops of chosen religion. It is deeply to be regretted, that the defence of the nation should have ever been weakened by the foolish partialities of certain men to the old system of division.

In terms of a increasing share of the war-expenses, it said: “We are exhausted in subsidising those by whom we have been ignominiously given up”.

The attitude of *The Press* towards the French Government's foreign policy is not as pro-French as historians have assumed. Republican France had revealed an imperialist profile in some countries on the continent where the national campaign against the old regime was relatively weak and dependent on French influence. The postscript to the first issue of *The Press* critically observes: “France is flushed with the insolence of success, having conquered all that part of Europe which she could not neutralise, and is rich in its pillage”.

The coverage and choice of foreign news of *The Press*, like those of the *Northern Star*, show us that a choice as such between a pro-Britain and pro-France stance did not exist for the editors of *The Press*. They sought to tell the people of Ireland how important it was for the prosperity of the nation to establish a new national government which should really represent people, by abolishing the old feudal regime. For example, an article on Santo Domingo, where natives had declared independence on the ground that they were participated in King Louis Capet's sovereignty, not in the revolution which challenged it (the so called Black Jacobin Revolution), reported: “they are on good terms with the Spaniards and are now masters of five-sixths of the island”. Then, as if linking independence with economic regeneration, it referred to an unexpected rapid increase in farm produce. A comment on the Hungarian insurrection is an illustration of the liberal materialism of the editors. It made a
critical comment on the *German Gazettes*, which foresaw that the insurrection would simply finish with the reinforcement of the Austrian armies. Pointing to the inevitable clash of interests between the Austrian Emperor and the Hungarian nobles, it said: “Experience has proved, that the levy of the Hungarian nobility gives more trouble than assistance to the Emperor”. It argued that the nobility were jealous of their own privileges and reluctant to take their peasants out of Hungary in wars ordered by the Emperor, while the Emperor had sought to deprive them of their privileges; hence, the more the Emperor sought to levy the nobility and peasants to enlarge the armies, the more murmurs and discontents he would provoke. Though peasants were dominated and exploited both by the Emperor and by nobles, there was an incompatibility of interest between the Emperor and nobles. This power structure was quite similar to that of Ireland: as Hungarian peasants cannot expect to be liberated unless they get rid of this twofold structure of domination itself, the people of Ireland cannot establish a modernised national government without a struggle with the old feudal regime. To conclude, in the words of the article: “in the feudal system, ... the forces which ought to act in concert [sic] are always at the point of acting against each other”.

Furthermore, *The Press* shows a deepened awareness of imperialism. An article, seeing the sectarian mobilisation of the Orangemen as nothing but a device for divide and rule, tried to convince people that a real enemy to be struggled against was the very hostility among people towards the other sect, which had been instilled by British rulers with the intent of impeding the formation of the union of a nation:

The old system of *divide et impera* was never more strongly exemplified in this ill-fated country, than in the present exertions of the English faction, to set one part of the people at daggers with the other, and excite both to mutual extermination. ... this faction has ever weakened, and been constantly enabled to trample on DEVOTED IRELAND, and 'tis on the established success of this system they still build their assurance of our perpetual subjugation.

From the very outset, *The Press* accused the British empire of delivering a fatal wound to Ireland by introducing hostile relations into the colonised society. It remarked: “to tax unrepresented colonies is somewhat a less violent proceeding than to conquer and divide a great independent state. This last is the greatest of political injuries, aggravated by the greatest of insults”. Pointing out the maleficence of imperialism, *The Press* also directed its attention to other nations which had fallen under the control of the British empire. The article entitled “Plain, honest reasons against Parliamentary Reform in Ireland” was a notable

57 Ibid., 17 October, 1797.
58 Ibid., 2 December, 1797.
59 Ibid., 28 September, 1797.
advance in critical analysis of imperialism. Drawing an analogy between the slavish state of the people of Ireland and that of other colonised nations, the article portrayed the Irish tenantry as "an oppressed, worried, racked, and ragged race of hungry malcontents, driven like negroes, and fleeced like the Gentoo Indians, by their Nabob task masters, to purchase British luxuries, or furnish finances for the gaming-table". A numerically small Protestant aristocracy had played the role of Nabob task masters in Ireland. In contrast with Sampson's claim to redress the unjust political condition in accordance with the genuine principles of British constitution, the article saw the injustice in the political system as a deliberate consequence of economic exploitation inherent in imperialism. It argued that if the reform led Irish politicians and landlords to pursue interests and happiness for the whole nation, and if it gave "birth to a spirit of useful reflection and active industry in the country", it would be "very injurious indeed to British interest and British influence in Ireland". Hence, it foresaw that England would seek political degeneration to preserve its own predominant power; as a result, those living in corruption and sectarian antagonism would never find out that "the productive pursuits in commerce" are "more eligible roads to affluence and honour for their children". The article claimed legal protection for industry in Ireland, which had been neglected not only by British governments to open the Irish market for British produce, but also by Irish politicians in return for their vested interests. It said that if Irish industry "would stand a fair chance of protection in their own country", it must do "the great injury" to "British produce in the Irish market". In the article's view, reform was not the matter of persuasion but of resistance, and it must be political, economic and social. Parliamentary reform was only a secondary product of this general reform.

The Press, expecting radicalised Foxite Whigs like Erskine, Sheridan and Fox himself to support and recognise a new government, lined up behind Fox to bring about the fall of the Pitt Administration. It distinguished the real radical line, which conceived that real liberation might result in a power struggle outside parliament, from the moderate line which tried to dissuade people from resorting to force. However, it still tried to retain room for common cause with those taking the moderate line. For example, The Press complimented Lord Moira on his speech in the British Parliament. It said: "Lord Moira interfered in order to save Ireland from that train of horrors which he clearly saw collecting. His advice, however, was not only not followed, but on the contrary it subjected him to the calumny of all the confidential and common servants of Administration in

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60 Ibid., 19 October, 1797.
61 Ibid..
the kingdom”. The tone of this report impressed readers with the inefficacy of peaceable measures against the British Government and led them to justify themselves in arming.

In its final stage, *The Press* published the letter from Thomas Paine, which he sent to the Council of Five Hundred in Paris. The letter shows the perspective held by Republican France of the actual state of the British empire. Portraying the Pitt Administration as the British counterpart of Robespierre’s Reign of Terror, the letter advocated aiding the people of England, Scotland and Ireland in their liberation from tyranny and oppressive taxation. It said: “There will be no lasting peace for France nor for the world, until the tyranny and corruption of the English government be abolished, and England, like Italy, become a Sister Republic.” As to the understanding of becoming a Sister Republic, there was a significant gap between the French Government and Irish radicals. The French Government saw Ireland as a part of the British empire, which should be republicanised together with England and Scotland. However, what the Irish radicals expected from the French Government was support for Ireland breaking off false sisterly relations with England. In their eyes, the establishment of a republic in Ireland was not a necessary condition for their purpose. Instead of the direct claim of republican government, *The Press* openly questioned the king about his responsibility for supervising his ministers. A postscript entitled “To the King” can be seen as an ultimatum demanding the exercise of like responsibility:

Deign to let your people, of all religions, be represented, or sit in the House of Commons. Dismiss the guides who have brought you to the brink of the precipice, and set this important truth be impressed on your mind; it is not by a furious course of unrelenting severity ... it is to be saved only by a timely and fair concession to popular demand.

We should not overlook the fact that the efforts *The Press* made were directed towards revealing the actual state of Ireland as totally unconstitutional. *The Press* which reflected the views of O'Connor was anti-imperialist in tone revealing a well-defined hostility to imperialism. Further revealing its O'Connorite inspiration, *The Press* combined two things, an anti-imperialist line, and a residue of confidence in the prospect of a Whig success against Pitt. As *The Press* itself reported, the government came to oppress printers by their arrest on the suspicion of involvement in *The Press* in the winter of 1797-98. The arrest of O'Connor on 28 February at Margate, England,

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62 Ibid., 28 September, 1797.
63 In reality, however, far from the compliment given by *The Press*, the indecision Moira's recurrent speeches assumed made Tone in Paris angry and disappointed: "his support is not worth receiving. He must speak out ALL, boldly, or be silent" (Tone, “Journal on 4 March 1798”, in Life II, p.467).
64 *The Press*, 15 February 1798.
65 Ibid., 30 September, 1797.
10.4 O'Connor’s Final Message to the Irish Nation and his Isolation from the United Irishmen: 1798

O'Connor published *The State of Ireland* on 1 February 1798. This work is an essay of political economy, more than a political pamphlet. As Hume’s *Political Discourses* is composed of two parts: economy and politics, the first half of the pamphlet is devoted to the analysis of an exploitative economic system in Ireland, and the second half to the discussion of desirable reform of the British constitution and government. In this pamphlet, O’Connor made theoretical efforts to close the gap between the liberal radicalism on which the united Irish movement had been based and the republicanism of the French Directory. He answered this issue by means of his Humean politics and liberal materialism.

O’Connor’s analysis of the drain of national capital was underpinned by the knowledge of the more visible subjection of the inhabitants of the West and East Indies to the British empire. The economic involvement of the West Indies with the empire had occasioned, far from their civilisation, their degradation to “the state of brute creation”, namely enslavement. In the East Indies as well, the empire had “plundered and devoured” the innocent inhabitants. O’Connor portrayed its imperialistic nature as the monster, who, “deluging all Europe with blood, making it a prey to famine and civil discord”, had “expanded its treasures”. Then, he cautioned the Irish nation: “Your home market is narrowed by an inundation of every species of British manufacture.... Your industry is robbed of its native food, chained down its native soil. Thus famished, manacled, and in infancy, it is thrown a prey to the monster of mercantile avarice”. 68 This accusation of imperialism recurred in the later part, again mentioning the East and West Indies. However, it is not only the exploitation of imperialism, but the hypocrisy or bureaucratic self-complacency of the empire in the guise of “commonwealth”, which his accusation targeted. A paradox of “forced” adoption of a “free” constitution in colonies was raised.

O’Connor remarked:

Nations which violate the sacred rights of other nations, to make constitutions, and to establish governments of their choice - nations which usurp dominion in every quarter of the globe; ... partitioning whole countries for having put down governments they felt oppressive, and forming constitutions they thought free - nations which dignify Usurpation and Robbery with the title of empire, who gloss over slaughter by calling it glory, and justify their insolence towards every other country under the pretence of maintaining national honour - with

68 O’Connor, *The State of Ireland*, p.8f..
violators of the rights of nations like these, warfare is so engrafted [sic] in their state....
Here, the legitimacy of the colonising and that of the colonised came into conflict. Once the legitimacy of the actual constitution is challenged in colonies, the constitution is revealed as based on force resorted to in the past. It was one of the maxims in Hume's politics which suggested to O'Connor that a nation with a free government does not necessarily secure freedom for other nations. Hume said:
It may easily be observed, that though free governments have been commonly the most happy for those who partake of their freedom; yet are they the most ruinous and oppressive to their provinces. ... a free state necessarily makes a great distinction, and must always do so, till men learn to love their neighbors as well as themselves. The conquerors, in such a government, are all legislators, and will be sure to contrive matters, by restrictions on trade, and by taxes, so as to draw some private, as well as public advantage from their conquests.

Applying this maxim to the Irish context, O'Connor declared:

[T]he Revolution of 1688, which in England was a triumph of liberty over bigotry and despotism, was in Ireland a Revolution from a system of predatory warfare and tyranny against persons, opinions and property, to a more orderly and legalized system of national debasement and plunder.

Revealing the fact that what England had seen as a right had been a unparalleled wrong for Ireland, he showed that Ireland had been forced to accept one-sided truth and justice. The legitimacy of the actual Protestant constitution and of resistance to the constitution came to conflict, where there was no common rule of judgment applicable to both England and Ireland. Then, O'Connor mediated the dispute by demanding that England should leave Ireland to adopt the same criterion of justice and freedom as England had applied to itself in the past, namely the justification that resistance to oppression is constitutional, lawful and right. With a long quotation from Locke's *On Civil Government*, he illustrated what criterion of justice the English Parliament adopted to justify its resistance in the English Revolution of 1688. In this sense, the quotation from Locke means a challenging demand to the British government, and should not be taken as evidence that he was within the framework of Lockean constitutionalism. "Making the constitution the standard to judge by", he resisted the actual constitution. He said: "Names go for nothing when the constitution is the stake to be fought for. It is this which not only justifies resistance, but make it an absolute duty". This fundamental constitutionalist principle was repeated in his letter to Lord Castlereagh after

67 O'Connor, ibid., p.30.
68 David Hume, "That Politics may be Reduced to a Science", in *David Hume Selected Essays*, p.17.
69 O'Connor, ibid., p.83.
70 Ibid., p.97.
his imprisonment:

IT]he constitution contained some of the purest principles of liberty ... they have most violently assailed ... they should be selected for exemplary justice, I have uniformly asserted -then let those vital principles of the constitution, be the standard, and let their violation be the criminal test. 71

O'Connor's view about monarchy must be more carefully looked into. Hume made a favourable comment on monarchy in terms of the treatment provinces would receive. He argued that, if "a monarch extends his dominions by conquest, he soon learns to consider his old and his new subjects as on the same footing; because all his subjects are to him the same"; hence "the provinces of absolute monarchies are always better treated than those of free states". He illustrated this observation with a comparison between the conquered lands of France and Ireland. In his view, although Ireland, "peopled from ENGLAND" to a considerable extent, possessed "so many rights and privileges as should naturally make it challenge better treatment than that of a conquered province", it had been treated worse than the provinces of France. 3

The view that, from the standpoint of the provinces, subjection to a monarch is better than to a parliament was convincing enough at the outset of the 1790s, when many provinces of the French absolute monarchy sought to establish their own national governments on an equal footing with France. Thus, the natives of Santo Domingo in declaring independence rested on their succession to Louis Capet's sovereignty over them, as a guarantee of independence from and equality with Capet's other dominion of France. By the same token, the existence of the Crown of Ireland, opposing Hume's view that Ireland had been conquered, guaranteed that Ireland had never been conquered by England. This view on the monarchy accounts for the appeal to the king in The Press. O'Connor himself never openly attacked a monarchical element of the government. In his view, the republican element of the British mixed government, which superseded the old monarchy in 1688, had encroached on the national rights of Ireland, and the Crown of Ireland still had been useful as the basis of the national independence of Ireland. Hence, standing outside the dichotomous framework between monarchism and republicanism, he saw the imperialism of the British "republican" government as the real target.

O'Connor's criticism of monopoly in the domestic political system, which we had seen in his former writings, recurred in this pamphlet. He further developed his argument against monopoly in terms of the necessity of its abolition for the maintenance of the political rights of each individual. He said: "the maintenance of Man's right should never depend on the will or even the

Hume, ibid., p.18.
virtue of those invested with power, but on the state of the independence and knowledge of the people”. Repeatedly, he claimed that the economic independence of each individual was “the guardian of liberty, and not the discretion or virtue of those they elect”. Moreover, his liberal materialism emphasised inevitable conflict between the civilised mentality and the ancient system. In his view, the progress of commerce and the improvement in mechanical power brings about vast social changes in property and human mind. These changes, which he called the revolution in property and in mind, give rise to friction between rising economic and mental independency among people and the ancient monopolised regime. Hence, stressing that it was not the Jacobins but the ongoing improvement in property and in mind which caused the political revolution, he warned Pitt and other ministers not to resist the progress of history by insulting “the people by calling them Jacobins”. His liberal materialism is manifest in this comment.

Unlike Marx, who considered the commercial stage as only a bourgeois society with a halfbaked liberation, O’Connor expected the abolition of hereditary rights like primogeniture and peerage to naturally lead to the activated emulation of a commercial society, which would result in the convergence of all on the middle level. He saw social support of the independency of individuals for sustenance of fair emulation as the essential requisite for the “civilised” society, as Hume’s notion of civilised society carries the connotation of political justice. What he saw as indispensable for the actualisation of a civilised society were two factors: the removal of ancient obstacles and the promotion of “the great and inexorable order of nature”. His wording reflects Hume’s term “the more natural and usual course of things” and “the general course of things”. Hume saw anything opposing the natural course of things as “violent”. In the same sense as Hume, O’Connor tried to convince ministers that the question as to whether the fulfillment of the two tasks would result in a violent revolution or in a peaceable reform depends on the attitude of the government towards the general course of things:

Do you not perceive, that by the great and inexorable order of nature, society has arrived at that period in which Hereditary Aristocracy and Representative Democracy cannot exist together, and that you cannot establish the former, unless the destroy that great revolution which has taken place in property and in mind, that has erected and greatened the latter? You must destroy commerce, and its influx of wealth. You must destroy machinery, its abridgements of labour, and its influx of the necessaries and conveniences of life.

74 Ibid., p.106.
75 Ibid., p.77f..
76 David Hume, “Of Commerce”, in David Hume Selected Essays, p.155, p.158.
77 O’Connor, ibid., p.80.
By the same token, O'Connor attributed the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution to Pitt's interference in the revolutionary process in France. O'Connor admired the phase of the Revolution when on 10 August 1792 the Girondins came to power. He portrayed it as "a Revolution which for its magnitude, was of such unparalleled mildness". Especially, he was impressed at the process of nationalist discourse in newly formed communicative publicness between May 1789 and August 1792, which formed a national agreement on the alteration of polity from a constitutional monarchy to a republic: "never before was the subject of how Man may be best protected and governed, so freely, so ably discussed". He strongly condemned Pitt's hard-line policy on France for leading the people of France to famine, anarchy and civil commotion, which "enabled Robespierre to establish his tyrannical power". This view conveys his strong support for the liberal doctrine of Girondins like Condorcet and Paine. Their practice in France also gave him two important hints for reform policy in Ireland. First, the creation of communicative publicness must precede the peaceable change of polity. Secondly, the exclusion of foreign interference is requisite to secure the union of the nation.

After the penetration of "the great and inexorable order of nature", O'Connor in the latter half of the pamphlet launched into a discussion of the desirable policy for the state of Ireland at that time. This part of the pamphlet was written with the intent of overcoming the divisions in the United Irish movement, rather than of attacking the government. There were two crucial issues inside the United Irish movement: the form of new government and the strategy to establish it. To deal with the former entailed a battle of words with the "vulgar" republicans manipulated by the French government, and with the latter a critique of the views of "moderate" leaders.

Concerning the form of new government, O'Connor tried to convince readers that the purpose of the United People of Ireland was not the creation of a Republic. Defining the term "republic" as a principle of government and not as a form of government, he defined "republic" as "where the public affairs are controlled by the bulk of the people". Taking the definition as a criterion, he compared the British constitution with typical republics in ancient Greece and Rome. He saw a characteristic of the British constitution in representative democracy with frequent elections since the time of the primitive Parliament of Alfred. If "the right of selecting whatever talents and virtue were to be found in the nation" was exerted correctly, it should be more republican than Greece and Rome, where half the inhabitants were slaves. Furthermore, pointing out that the peerage and the king were restrained by the Constitution to a greater degree

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78 Ibid., p.61.
79 Ibid., p.96.
than their Roman counterparts (the Senate and the Consul), he concluded that, if the electoral system properly worked, the British constitution should be virtually republican; hence, although the British constitution had the monarch and the nobility as two of its components, unlike other monarchs and nobles in Europe, the two elements would not infringe the freedom of people. In his view, it was not the monarchy but the Prime Minister and his accomplices who had destroyed the virtual republic by leaving the constitutional monarchy under the sole control of "a proprietary representation". In this way, O'Connor, arguing that the British constitution is virtually republican, conflated the claim for the restoration of the genuine British constitution with that for the establishment of republican government, although the latter was different from what the French government meant by "a sister republic". This solution to the gap between constitutionalism and republicanism, which might be seen as a *deus ex machina*, presents a striking contrast to that of Tone, whose painful effort resulted in deviation from his original position: fundamental constitutionalism. O'Connor argued that "the life and soul" of the constitutions adopted by America and France: "Representative Democracy, with its organisations and frequent elections, and the Trial by Jury", were taken from the British constitution; hence, Ireland did not need to establish a new republican constitution immediately.  

Then, asserting that it was the aim of the united national movement of Ireland to struggle, not against the constitutional monarchy, but against the imperialistic "republican" British ministers, who had destroyed the "republican" constitution in Ireland, he held the fort against the interference of the French government and pro-French vulgar republicans.

His position, however, should not be seen as that of a constitutional monarchist. According to his historical philosophy, even if revolution was not the issue, the monarchical element was fated to become inexpedient and to be abolished as a society became more civilised. What he thought as the most important issue at that moment was to firmly install a democratic representative system within the framework of constitutional monarchy: "Liberty cannot stand but on the broad, firm and perfect basis of Universal Representation. Be the superstructure what it may, if you will have Liberty, you must first establish this foundation for it to rest on".  

He expected that, once a perfect representative system was fixed on, it would function as the built-in device for altering the constitution itself according as society progressed towards more civilised stages. As the National Assembly in France, once formed on the basis of constitutional monarchy, had come to resolve to abolish the monarchy, O'Connor believed that political reform in Ireland would follow the

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50 Ibid., p.107f.
51 Ibid., p.106.
same course soon or later, because it was “the great and inexorable order of nature”. He observed: “If this great revolution in property and mind, ... has rendered it difficult to maintain hereditary kingship, it has not rendered it less difficult to uphold hereditary lordship”. Unlike his attitude towards the monarchy, he repeatedly called for abolition of the hereditary right of the aristocracy in the House of Lords, and for their reduction to the mere status of representatives of landed proprietors. Judging the Irish House of Lords as occupied by English peers “without property, connection, residence, or any constitutional qualification” in Ireland, he asserted that the really constitutional House of Lords had already been destroyed in Ireland by the British ministers.  

However, O’Connor did not pursue the immediate change in form of government. He thought that it should not be taken up as an urgent political agenda of the united Irish movement; rather, the judgment on the expediency of the actual form of government should be left to the people, who would become capable of judging matters individually in parallel with their increasing economic independency. “[Y]ou will reform YOURSELVES; this is the true reformation”, he said. This statement shows an affinity with Sampson’s words in his address: “Remember that the first step towards reform is to reform ourselves, and that before we pretend to control the vices of our rulers we should be able to control our own passions”. In the two men’s rationalist view, to secure political and social participation for every individual was itself the most important task government should take upon itself, because the enlightenment of people’s mind and the improvement in their economic condition depended on their communicative actions in public “Having once re-established your liberties on the basis of perfect representation, which is the basis of your constitution, you will bring to the test what parts of the constitution can stand, and what parts the great revolution in property and in mind has excluded. ... Be that as it may, DO YOUR PART”. This shows the germ of participative democracy in the late eighteenth century.

The final part of the pamphlet turns from form of government to strategy and becomes an attack on the moderate leaders. The actual target of his criticism was Thomas Addis Emmet. Although Emmet was a United Irishmen from an early stage to the final, he was incapable of grasping the central issue of the affair. He was indeed an able lawyer, but lacked a sense of political realities. His loose use of “republican” or “republic” in his examination before the secret committee and in his Towards the History of Ireland has misled not only contemporaries but present-day historians. Under the cross examination,
Emmet testified that the object of the United Irishmen was a redress of grievances; two modes of accomplishing that object presented themselves to their view; one was a reform by peaceable means, the other was a revolution and republic ... when they saw they could not accomplish the object ... a redress of their grievances by a reform, they determined in despair to procure it by a revolution, which, I am persuaded, is inevitable, unless a reform be granted.  

As several observations in this chapter have shown, the theoretical framework of some leaders did not present the alternatives of reform in stark laws of peaceable means and a violent republican revolution. In reality, their writings before the rebellion at most demanded the restoration of the genuine British constitution by an armed people. In their view, it depended on the British government whether the armed demand for the restoration would result in bloodshed or in a bloodless victory, just as Parliament in the English Revolution had no guarantee of a bloodless victory in advance. While O'Connor struggled to articulate the precise purpose of the United Irish movement, which had been misleadingly stigmatized as “republican” and “Jacobin” by the government, Emmet carelessly called those who opted for an armed policy republicans. In his *Towards the History of Ireland*, he continued to portray radicalised liberals (fundamental constitutionalists) as republicans. Referring to O’Connor’s speech on the Catholic question in 1795:

[H]e inferred, that if predicted subversion were, in truth, to take place, great good to the whole nation would be the immediate consequence. Although it was impossible to arrive at this conclusion, except by arguments familiar to all reflecting republicans, and often, but covertly, urged in the Northern Star and their other favourite publications, yet this speech excited the utmost astonishment.  

Emmet distorted the gist of O’Connor’s speech. As we have seen, O’Connor never said that subversion would bring about great good, but claimed that the defence of the Protestant constitution was not vital to the happiness and interests of the nation. Although *Towards the History*... was written after the rebellion, Emmet’s inaccurate use of “republican”, his biassed view of radical liberals and his self-serving narrative historiography of the united Irish movement illustrate how he was ready to shape the recent history of the past to serve his own end. He lacked a sense of analysing political circumstances as a strategic means of attaining political ends.

O’Connor saw in politics the dynamics of power struggle. When Hume and O’Connor asserted that politics may be reduced to a science, they meant dynamics and mechanics by “science”. Politics was supposed to analyse social

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*“Substance of Thomas Addis Emmet’s Examination before the Secret Committee of the House of Lords, August 10, 1798” in William James MacNeven, *Pieces of Irish History* (New York, 1807).*

relations of power and force within the framework of dynamics, and jurisprudence was seen as analogous to applied mechanics. In O'Connor’s words:

If it cannot be denied that politics are governed by principles as fixed as any other science whatever - if the history of human society furnishes uniform testimony that monopoly of property creates monopoly of power, that monopoly of power occasions the abuse of it, - if these principles are as fixed and invariable in politics, as that lead descends by the principle of gravitations, or that by the principles of mathematics the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, how does the term moderation apply to the adoption of principles in one science, any more than in the other?

O'Connor drew this argument from Hume's *That politics may be Reduced to a Science*. Compare the quotation above with the following sentences from Hume:

> So great is the force of laws, and of particular forms of government, and so little dependence have they on the humours and tempers of men, that consequences almost as general and certain may sometimes be deduced from them, as any which the mathematical sciences afford us. 87

Hume stressed the distinction between moderation in private virtue and order and moderation brought about by good laws. In his view, the latter meant the due balance of power between parties differing in interest (for example, the nobility and people), which should result not from the moderation in private virtue of each party, but from a good legal system, in which the contest between them is to strike a balance. He said: “Good laws may beget order and moderation in the government, where the manners and customs have instilled little humanity or justice into the temper of men”. 88 This view is reflected in O'Connor’s perception. He said: “[W]hat has this moderation [i.e. as the basis of virtue] to do with the moderation with which we adopt the principles of political science ... When I speak of politics, I mean that first of all sciences which consists in framing laws according to the fixed principles of human nature”. 89 Just as Hume, seeing a distinction between the conflict of parties differing in interests and those differing in principles, required the latter to be moderate, O'Connor also added a proviso about the moderation between those parties in footnotes: “in contest between party and party, the more moderate they, the less mischievous”. 90 These literal parallels between the two texts reveal the influence of Humean political dynamics on O'Connor’s radical constitutionalism.

In politics --the dynamics of power struggle-- those who gain power are subsequently legitimatized by change in the legal system, even if they had first been publicly judged as illegitimate. The power and force of the winner in a

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87 David Hume, “That Politics may be Reduced to a Science”, in *David Hume Selected Essays*, p.14.
88 Ibid., p.20.
89 O’Connor, ibid., p.103f.
90 Hume, ibid., p.24; O’Connor, ibid., p.104.
struggle is always justified, those of the loser stigmatized as rebellion or tyranny; there is no middle between the right and the wrong; political history is a process of dialectic reversal between right and wrong. Aware of these severe principles of politics, O'Connor said:

The minor part are the rebels: a decided majority can never rebel. ... If not, what were the liberties of England but rebellion, aided by foreign assistance, against the bigotry and tyranny of Stuart? What are the liberties of America but rebellion, aided by France, against the tyranny of Britain? ... the annals of mankind afford no instance of tyrants restoring the liberties they had usurped as long as they had power to hold them, or of a people regaining their freedom but by this sort of rebellion.

O'Connor, seeking in desperation to unite the movement, argued for cohesion in the forthcoming decisive moment.

In the autumn of 1797, O'Connor was informed that France was planning to invade England and was urged to assist the plan by arranging an immediate rising in Ireland. At this stage, he tried to settle the best way to stand on an equal footing with France. He foresaw that, if Ireland took no action to claim its independency, it would naturally be treated as a province of Britain by the French invasion of Britain; as a result, far from alliance on an equal footing, France in turn would gain ascendancy over Ireland. However, this awkward position could become an opportunity for national independence, if the Irish nation, remaining independent both of Britain and France, established a new government, when the two powers immediately negated each other. Hence, he saw the rising at that moment as necessary not only to retain reciprocity with France, but to secure the independence of the nation. In other words, the French, on their arrival, would be coming as allies of forces who had already raised their standards, whereas, if they were content to await the arrival of the French, their ability to assent themselves was jeopardised by the very situation which invasion itself produced. The urgency of the matter led him to press other members of the United Irishmen to incite hostility among people towards the Orangemen and the Yeoman Corps.

O'Connor's conduct was to be portrayed inadequately by those biased against the radicals. By the words "the Orangemen" and "the Yeoman Corps", O'Connor himself meant not Protestants, but the British camp, hostile to the union of the Irish nation. The portrayal of the Orangemen as an example of "divide et impera" in The Press, although not necessarily written by O'Connor himself, illustrates his non-sectarian view. He observed: "[T]he people of Ireland demand that strict justice and reciprocal benefit shall be the bond of

\cite{O'Connor, ibid., p.103.}
\cite{The Press, 2 December 1797. On this point, I have discussed in this chapter, see p. 245f.}

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alliance". However, his proposal for a rising was opposed as sectarian and militant by Emmet and other "moderate" leaders. What he saw as their incapacity for recognising the dynamics of power struggle and their lack of foresight drove O'Connor to rage. Implicitly he attacked the inconsistency of their claim: "Contrast this manly assertion of their national rights with the jargon of traitors, who cry up the weakness of Ireland, and decry her strength; asserting, with the glorious example of American freedom full in their teeth, that if we are not a province to England, we must be a province to France". In the eyes of O'Connor, the moderates' view seemed self-seeking, opportunist and even dangerous in the sense that it would cause the most disastrous results: a split or conflict within the nation. Emmet, criticising those who sought to act on the French request for a rising, argued that France, superseding Britain, might subject Ireland to its rule. He favoured in reverse a rising after French troops arrived, because the armed force of the United Irishmen on its own was too weak to withstand British troops. Furthermore, opposing O'Connor's plan to organise as many as possible peasants under arms, he favoured a rising of selected bodies of people acting together with French troops. Given the inconsistency in this argument, his opinion was less a constructive criticism, than an ad hoc argument against making the first move. In O'Connor's view, a rising after the arrival of French troops would be likely to split the people into two factions: pro-British and Pro-French, and to make national union vulnerable to foreign interference. This view derived from his experience in Belfast in the aftermath of the French invasion in 1796, where a town meeting to declare the right of self-defence was disrupted by pro-British Volunteer corps. Moreover, for O'Connor, the arming of peasants had a political as well as military purpose to demonstrate the solidarity of the people of Ireland as a nation.

O'Connor's role and the validity of his perceptions still need to be explored in the political field. Frank McDermott's account in his book is unduly hostile, and the real O'Connor had a greater strength than that account suggested. Of course, that does not mean that O'Connor may be vindicated in the political wisdom of his views. Although, on his own words, he was certainly aware of the danger of civil war, his course of action at that time was impractical, because, as Knox foresaw in 1796, it would, given a divided reaction in Belfast, stoke the flames of civil war. Though unrealistic his political views may have been, they are no more so than Emmet's view, which, indeed, we know only from self-exculpatory evidence and writing after the event, but which essentially combined radicalness and temporising in action; his dismissal of the views of Emmet and others seems well-founded in terms of its exasperation with their

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83 O'Connor, ibid., p.95.
84 Ibid., p.95.
ideas, which were arguably more unrealistic than O'Connor's in their perception of what would take place and the degree of control they could maintain either over the people or, with a limited military muster of their own, over the French. The appearance of *The Press* coincides also with the spread of the United Irishmen as a people's movement, and one deliberately conceived as a people's armed force, in the autumn of 1797 under the impetus of lower class radicals. * Hence, it is easy to visualise the different perceptions of the two men sharpening under the pressure of the rapid evolution of events, either towards greater boldness (O'Connor) or greater caution (Emmet).

O'Connor's disappointment with the moderate leaders became a parallel two years later to what he felt about Irish politicians in May 1795. He found in leaders of the United Irishmen no prospect of bringing a civilised society to Ireland. The last words of the pamphlet conveys his disappointment with them. He said: "They are men in whom the feelings of sympathy, that happy corrective of selfishness, is wholly extinct; that sympathy which, forgetting the individual being, throws fortune and life in the common stock of suffering humanity, and gloriously ventures his all in the cause of his fellows". * Opposing those who respected moderation, he ironically argued that the most important virtue in politics should be sympathy, not moderation. O'Connor had never before rested social reform on moral sentiments. Social reform had been described as the requirements of time and history. At this stage, however, attacking the selfishness and egotism of the men of property, he came to deplore the lack of sentiments of social justice. As Tone saw sympathy as the sole guardian of justice, O'Connor, conflating Smith's "sympathy" and Paine's "common stock of society", conceptualised social justice. * When Paine said that a man "throws" some of his rights "into the common stock as a member of society", the throwing meant reciprocal action. * However, O'Connor called for giving vent to sympathy with humanity and taking a chance in putting "fortune and life" at risk. This reflected the divide within the executive which put O'Connor and his close ally Fitzgerald at cross-purposes with the more moderate and cautious Emmet and McNeven. His perception of the situation seems to have been that his opponents did not favour decisive action for establishing real representative democracy. He left for London in February 1798 with the intent of a journey to France. However, he was arrested at Margate on 28 February 1798. That brought his active career in Ireland to an

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* O'Connor, ibid., p.104.
* See, Chapter 9.
end. However, the show of Whig support for O'Connor while awaiting trial shows that, whatever one's assessment of O'Connor's realism may be, his concept of the use of Whig alliance for an Irish purpose, was of itself not a mere illusion. As the analysis of O'Connor's thought in this chapter shows, his case for political reform was based on Lockean notion of right of resistance and Humean politics. Hence, it is not surprising that his political discourse in public gave his Whig supporters in Britain not only personal but political sympathy for him, and that they never suspected his secret contact with the French government.
Chapter 11: CONCLUSION

The minor part are the rebels: a decided majority can never rebel.  

Arthur O’Connor

Is our constitution very bad? . . . Public affairs, in such a government, must necessarily go to confusion, by whatever hands they are conducted; and the zeal of patriots is in that case much less requisite than the patience and submission of philosophers.

David Hume

In this thesis, I have articulated the formation of liberal radicalism in the 1780s and 1790s. The thesis, confined to tracing the formation of liberal radicalism in the political discourses of Tone, Sampson and O’Connor, does not touch on the question as to what influence the three men had on the whole movement of the United Irishmen. Moreover, emphasis of the existence of liberal radicalism may have led to playing down other theoretical strands in the United Irish movement. This thesis is only one step towards a complete portrayal of the movement. In the history of British political thought, however, an attempt to trace liberal radicalism is significant in the sense that it would bridge the gap between Lockean contractual theory and Humean politics. In this concluding chapter, the discourse of Tone, Sampson and O’Connor on “British constitution”, “the right of resistance” and “the British empire”, should be characterised in the context of political thought. The outstanding feature of the three men’s political thoughts is the link between anti-imperialism and the liberal doctrine based on the British constitutionalism. To articulate the linkage, their anti-imperialism should be distinguished from the patriotism in the 1780s, at the same time their liberal radicalism from liberal imperialism.

Anti-imperialism among liberal radicals seems to coincide with the patriotism of the 1780s in the claim for independence of Ireland from Britain. However, as mentioned in the previous chapters, anti-imperialism originated not in the patriotism, but in liberal imperialism itself. The radicals’ challenge to the established political system rested on the idealised notion of the British constitution. Throughout the eighteenth century, however, the notion of the British constitution did not have clear fixed contents. Although the same term was adopted by the patriots of 1780s and the radicals of 1790s, there was a difference in its connotation. When the patriots, drawing on Molyneux, claimed the restoration of the ancient constitution established by a compact, the notion of mixed government meant the balance of three estates, a king, lords and commons in parliament. As many political reformers came to attack the

2 David Hume, “That Politics may be Reduced to a Science”, in S. Copley (ed.) David Hume Selected Essays, p.23.
increase of the king’s influence through political corruption for its damaging effect on the balance, the notion of the balance of the three estates in parliament became mixed with the idea of separation of powers in the contemporary political discourse. What was at stake in the idea of separation of powers, as Locke and Montesquieu theorised, was the structure of the executive, legislative and other powers. When Hume re-examined the mixed government in Britain, he re-defined it as the system of checks and controls of powers and re-estimated how it was appropriate for commercial society. Despite the limited efficacy of the actual mixed government, he suggested how to reform its power structure. As John Robertson points out, in the “Idea of a perfect Commonwealth”, Hume argued that “the classical republican was no model to which to seek to return” and that “in a large modern state ... it [i.e. the office of legislator] was one for which ... an ever larger proportion of the people were being equipped by the habits and values associated with commercial activity”. Although Tone did not completely rid himself of classical republicanism, O’Connor and Sampson’s policy shared this renewed notion of the British constitution as shown in Chapters 8, 9 and 10. As far as Tone, Sampson and O’Connor sought to modernise government in accordance with a principle of the balance of the three estates in parliament, they did not differ with liberal imperialists. Then, what made them anti-imperialists?

The starting point of the three men was the monopoly in the Irish government, which they saw as the most serious obstacle to economic development in Ireland. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Adam Smith supposed a union between Ireland and Great Britain would deliver the people of Ireland from the aristocratic monopoly, and other liberal supporters of the British constitution both in Ireland and Britain tended to favour union relying on the ability of the British imperial administration to secure liberty and wealth. Although the notion of the British empire was held both by liberals and patriots under the 1782 system, the notion of the British empire itself had divergent connotations. As J.G.A. Pocock classifies, the understanding of the British empire pivoted on the assumed relations between crown, parliament and people: (1) “to unite the colonies with parliament by representation”; (2) “to subject the colonies to parliament by imperial and military power”; (3) “to rid parliament of the colonies by recognising their independence”. Pocock classifies Adam Smith, David Hume and Josiah Tucker as imperial realists into the third group.

in which the empire was seen as designed to promote national wealth. Imperial realists thought that the empire consisted in commercial treaties to secure free trade within the empire. Following Adam Smith, Pitt also took this line. He saw the commercial treaty between the mother land and colonies as an indispensable element of the construction of the empire. This view led him to the attempt to enter a commercial treaty with Ireland in 1784-5. However, it did not succeed. When Pitt tried to establish a free trade system between Ireland and Britain in the middle of the 1780s, Irish patriot politicians and manufacturers, despite their positive attitude towards the empire, sought tariff-protection against British competition. Although Richard Koebner suggests that this failure meant that the British Empire did not acquire “an official status in constitutional language”, it also shows the existence of another notion of the empire.

Actually, it was what Pocock refers to as another option --a fourth one in effect-- to “compromise the unity of crown and parliament by sharing the crown with other parliaments, which he saw as “an alternative not considered” in the American crisis in the middle of the 1770s. However, a series of Burke’s parliamentary speeches on the American colonies made this option feasible at least in the Irish political milieu. The notion of “the unity of crown and parliament by sharing the crown with other parliaments” coincides with Burke’s notion of the British empire. Richard Koebner, arguing that “in the winter of 1774/5 the name of the British Empire acquired a status in British public life which it had not possessed before”, mentioned Burke and Smith as the contributors to the publicisation of the British empire. Koebner as well as Pocock identifies the difference between Smith’s definition of the empire and Burke’s: the former fits in with the third group in Pocock’s classification, the latter the fourth. As mentioned in the beginning of this thesis, Burke’s definition of the empire is manifested in his statement: “An empire is the aggregate of many states under one common head”. Koebner points out that Richard Price imitated Burke’s definition. However, Burke and Price significantly differed in the question as to what unites the states. Whereas the former opted for one common head, namely a king, the latter opted for “some common bond or tie”.

In Pocock’s words, Edmund Burke ... seems to have presented it[a code or consensus of informal understandings which governed the relations between crown, parliament and colonial governors and

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7 Pocock, ibid., p.345f.
8 Richard Koebner, Empire , p.219.
assemblies] in terms rather of the prudence of *gubernaculum* than of the binding precedents of *jurisdictio*; and the apex of the ancient constitution had long been the sovereignty of the king-in parliament. ... This ‘empire’, then, was not held together by *pacta, foedera* or a *jus publicum*, but by the sovereignty of the crown in parliament. 11

Burke’s notion of the empire was welcomed in the Irish context, because it enabled the people of Ireland to assume that the integrating authority of the Crown was shared both by Great Britain and Ireland as independent kingdoms. Even in the eyes of the patriots of the 1780s who embraced the notion of king-in parliament in the ancient constitution, the idea of the empire under one common head was compatible with their notion of independent kingdom. As Jacqueline Hill points out,

the insistence that the Irish constitution involved an intimate connection with the ‘free empire’ of Britain was significant. It represented a warning to any separatists among contemporary radicals; it also indicated that ... the transformation of ‘England’ into the ‘British empire’ had been accomplished without the loss of liberty. 12

The intimate connection with the free empire was underpinned by the notion of the transplantation of the British free constitution, which Burke’s speeches disseminated after 1775 and which even O’Connor assumed in his parliamentary speech as mentioned in Chapter 8. Moreover, the Burkeian notion of the empire was symbolised by the term “imperial” Crown of Ireland. As Koebner remarks, “the Imperial Crown, ... was submitted by Grattan to a drastic redefinition. As the kingdom of Ireland was ‘a distinct kingdom’ with ‘a Parliament of her own ... the Crown of Ireland was to be styled as an ‘Imperial Crown’ in itself”. 13 The Crown of Ireland which had been restored by Molyneux’s discourse, was transformed into the “imperial Crown”, which led the people of Ireland to a self-portrait as a partner of Britain.

While, as Jacqueline Hill points out, the intimate connection of the Irish constitution with the “free empire” was “a warning to any separatists”, Tone, Sampson and O’Connor, aware that the British constitution had not been transplanted to Ireland perfectly, accepted it and expected it to have liberal effects on the political environment in the earlier stage of their political commitment. The radicals embraced the ideals of the British constitution and of the British empire. However, the actual response of the Pitt’s administration did not come up to their expectation. Far from supporting the effort to unite the nation, the administration backed the aristocracy in defeating the Catholic reform bill, which should have been a key stone of the union of the Irish nation.


12 Jacqueline Hill, “Ireland without Union: Molyneux and his Legacy”, in John Robertson (ed.), *A Union for Empire: Political Thought and the British Union of 1707*, p.295.


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Its conduct revealed that the British administration, contrary to Smith's theory, would never help the nation overthrow the aristocratic monopoly. While liberal imperialists still believed that a total separation from Great Britain would have an ill-effect on conflicts between factions, because, as Smith said, if the coercive power of the British government “was entirely taken away, they would probably soon break out into open violence and bloodshed” (14), liberal radicals from 1795 came to think of the British influence as the real source of the domestic monopoly as Tone noticed as early as 1790. Under control of the empire, a free constitution could not be established in Ireland. This reverse was endorsed by O'Connor's analysis of economic exploitation and political injustice in The State of Ireland as mentioned in Chapter 10.

When the radicals began to seek the separation from the British empire, the notion of the Crown (the King) was again used for the guarantee of the independent sovereignty over Ireland. Then, the separation and the establishment of a new government was justified as a cancellation of the contract with the king. The citation from Locke in O'Connor's pamphlet should be understood in this context, rather than as a piece of evidence that he remained Lockean liberal. Moreover, Humean politics, which rejected contractual theory, had difficulty in justifying their resistance as a restoration of sovereignty to the people. Hume, dismissing the historical legitimisation both of subjugation and resistance as fruitless, stressed the importance of the actual relation of interests as a criterion for justification. For him, social institutions including political systems are perpetually unstable. Hence, nobody can legitimise any new system before it is established, but it should be justified after that, as John Robertson says, in accordance with “a theory of customary legitimacy”. (15) This view accepted the possibility of resistance as an accusation against injustice, but could not justify the conduct itself in advance. Therefore, as the American colonists did, the radicals resorted to the Lockean right of resistance.

However, this radicalism came across a very “foreign” substance: a military alliance with France. In practical terms, the shadow of France, contrary to their initial expectation, resulted in a disturbing element to national union. It may be argued too that combining French alliance with alliance with English Whigs was unrealistic. However, it was at least a working political hypothesis or plan (and took advantage of, and worked on, the Whig interest in Irish events in 1797 and 1798). If it was unrealistic, it was first and foremost so in terms of assessment of the effective strength or short-term prospects of the Foxite Whigs.

Pocock points out the need for “the historian of British political thought” to “begin tracing the complex history of the various Irish political discourses - patriot, unionist and United Irish; Protestant, Catholic and Presbyterian ...”. I hope my thesis will contribute to exploration of this subject. However, the thesis is confined to tracing the development of liberal radicalism in the British constitutionalist tradition. There are some important questions remaining untouched: first, the influence of the Northern liberal tradition, which was referred to only once in Chapter 3, on the United Irish movement; secondly, the democratic dimension of liberal radicalism; thirdly, the development of liberal doctrine in the political discourse of Catholics. These three are essential for the full articulation of the United Irish movement in its ideological dimension.

In the last analysis of course the concern of this thesis is not the practicality of action or the wisdom of political judgment, but the world of ideas. As Valentine Lawless (the second earl of Lord Cloncurry) mentioned in his memoir, there was a liberal link extending over Ireland and England: Edward Fitzgerald, Emmet, Sampson, Grattan, Curran, and O’Connor on the Irish side; John Horne Tooke, Francis Burdett, C.J. Fox on the British side. This liberal milieu was a birth place of liberal radicalism. Among them, O’Connor, successfully articulating their liberal radicalism, connected those on both sides of the Irish Sea. In that sense, at least, the scale of O’Connor’s thought is impressive. Starting out from liberal imperialism based on Smith and Hume, it envisaged a real participatory democracy, and in the obscure conflicts within the United Irish leadership seems to mark a much more advanced profile in politics, radicalism and political philosophy. Whatever the rights and wrongs of daily debate in the secret councils of the United Irishmen, O’Connor at least had a well-defined philosophy; so to a degree had others like Sampson, Russell and Tone who shared some or many of his ideas. The radicals defined their new world: civilised society, and articulated freedom of individuals and of nations. Ironically enough, nothing depicts the character of the radicals more vividly and accurately than Goldsmith’s “Retaliation”, an epitaph for Burke. By quoting a passage from it, this thesis may be concluded:

Too nice for a statesman, too proud for a wit:
For a patriot, too cool; for a drudge, disobedient;

And too fond of the right to pursue the expedient.  

SKETCH 1

A comparison among the four strands in political discourses in the 1780-90s

[Sketch 1]

- Patriotic civic humanism based on the notion of ancient constitution
- Old constitutionalism: recognition of government on the ground of consent
- Vulgar Whiggish constitutionalism based on Locke's liberal doctrine
- Negative attitude towards the ideal of the British Empire

- Liberal radicalism
- New constitutionalism based on Humean politics: recognition of government on the ground of expediency
- Imperialistic liberalism based on Smithian political economy
- Affirmative attitude towards the ideal of the British Empire
SKETCH 2

The formation of liberal radicalism

[Sketch 2]

- Patriotic civic humanism based on ancient republican constitution and regionalistic nationalism leading to representative democracy.

- Vulgar Whiggish constitutionalism based on Lockean liberal doctrine and the power of resisting sovereign.

- Imperialistic liberalism based on Smithian political economy.

- Liberal materialism: the actualization of civilized society in the commercial stage.

- Humean politics: the constitutional justification of legal resistance as the counter-power against authorized power for checks and balances.

- Fundamental constitutionalism.
An analysis of political discourses on the Regency crisis

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