



War, State, and Society in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland

Stephen Conway

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This book explores the impact of the wars of 1739-63 on Britain and Ireland. The period was dominated by armed struggle between Britain and the Bourbon powers, particularly France. These wars, especially the Seven Years War of 1756-63, saw a considerable mobilization of manpower, materiel and money. They had important affects on the British and Irish economies, on social divisions and the development of what we might term social policy, on popular and parliamentary politics, on religion, on national sentiment, and on the nature and scale of Britain's overseas possessions and attitudes to empire.

To fight these wars, partnerships of various kinds were necessary. Partnership with European allies was recognized, at least by parts of the political nation, to be essential to the pursuit of victory. Partnership with the North American colonies was also seen as imperative to military success. Within Britain and Ireland, partnerships were no less important. The peoples of the different nations of the two islands were forced into partnership, or entered into it willingly, in order to fight the conflicts of the period and to resist Bourbon invasion threats. At the level of 'high' politics, the Seven Years War saw the forming of an informal partnership between Whigs and Tories in support of the Pitt-Newcastle government's prosecution of the war. The various Protestant denominations - established churches and Dissenters - were brought into a form of partnership based on Protestant solidarity in the face of the Catholic threat from France and Spain. And, perhaps above all, partnerships were forged between the British state and local and private interest in order to secure the necessary mobilization of men, resources, and money.

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