A kingdom near lost:[1] English military recovery in Ireland, 1600-03

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ABSTRACT
Ireland was rarely a peaceful realm for Elizabeth I, but Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone and his allies brought the edifice of English power in Ireland to the brink of collapse. The war in Ireland at the end of the sixteenth century devoured money, lives and reputations at a prodigious rate. However seven years of Irish success ended when in 1600 the Queen appointed Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy as Lord Deputy. Success replaced failure, but only after the new Lord Deputy transformed English strategy and rebuilt the army into an instrument fit for purpose.

The victory over the Spanish Armada of 1588 looms large in the history of early-modern England, to the point of being the stuff of legend; the event is tightly woven into the fabric of the national consciousness. The shattering of the Spanish fleet along the rocky shores of the west of Ireland may have appeared as divine retribution on the pride of Iberian military power, but the seeds of what has become known as the Nine Years War or Tyrone's Rebellion were sown. Survivors of the ill-fated fleet established contacts between the Spanish court and the Irish lords in Ulster, the most powerful of whom was Hugh O'Neill, second Earl of Tyrone. Furthermore, Philip II of Spain nurtured Irish ambitions with offers of military and financial support. Ulster was fertile ground for Spanish promises as the English authorities in Dublin encroached on the power and privileges of the native Irish lords. Attempts at imposing English law, the breaking up of Irish lordships and government sanction of rapacious army officers, convinced many native Irish lords that it was only a matter of time before their

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[1] Captain Francis Shane to Sir Robert Cecil, 4 February 1600, in *Calendar of state papers relating to Ireland*, H. C. Hamilton, E. G. Atkinson and R. P. Mahaffy (eds.), 24 vols, (London, HMSO, 1860-1912) Vol. viii pp.460-2 (henceforth cited as *CSPI*).

patrimonies were despoiled and overturned.[2] Within five years, conspiracy had flared into open warfare.

From 1593-99, successive English deputies and the council in Dublin struggled to counter the resurgent power of an unprecedented Irish confederacy led by O'Neill. The Irish marched from one victory to another, while failure dogged every attempt by the crown to stop them. The reputations of men such as Sir John Norreys and Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, foundered in a war which appeared insoluble. However, the arrival in Dublin of Charles Blount, eighth Baron Mountjoy as Lord Deputy led to a dramatic change in fortunes and in the space of a year the tide of war was radically reversed. Success replaced English failure, while frustration and defeat was visited upon the Irish confederates, whose victories to that point had pushed the English establishment in Ireland to the point of collapse. How was this radical reversal realised?

Elizabethan power in Ireland had been in retreat since the rising of the Ulster lords in 1593. Under O'Neill's leadership the Irish confederates repeatedly defeated the Crown field armies. The conflict began with a proxy-war waged by O'Neill through Hugh Maguire, Lord of Fermanagh, Sir Brian O'Rourke in Leitrim and the MacMahons in Monaghan. Hugh Roe O'Donnell, Lord of Tirconnell joined the confederates in 1594. While the Crown's forces unsuccessfully attempted to bring those Irish lords to heel, O'Neill maintained a façade of loyalty, enabling him to suppress, intimidate and where necessary assassinate English client lords in Ulster. O'Neill's deception lasted until February 1595 when he broke into open warfare against the Crown, by which time he had secured the fealty of all the Irish leaders in Ulster and reduced English power in Ulster to a few tenuous garrisons. Over the next four years three Lord Deputies and thousands of troops failed to check the resurgent power of O'Neill and his allies, and by 1599 the Irish confederates controlled most of the country.

Prior to 1600 the Crown's forces were generally unable to successfully engage with O'Neill's men. This was in part due to fundamental flaws in English tactics and equipment. Though they fought in a manner consistent with military operations on continental Europe, for most of the war the English failed to accept the realities of the rough Irish terrain, which lacked roads and was broken up with woods and bogs. Moreover English commanders deployed their infantry in dense formations; refusing to adapt their methods to the terrain. Consequently, their operational and tactical

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[2] Hiram Morgan, *Tyrone's rebellion: the outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland,* (Dublin, Gill and MacMillan, 1993), p.164.

mobility was critically impaired. O'Neill made no such mistakes. The Earl created an infantry force which drew on military reforms in Europe, while recognising the practical realities of deploying infantry in the Irish landscape.

The Irish infantry were primarily pike and shot, but had a far greater proportion of shot than English units; almost 80 percent. The shot were exclusively armed with calivers and typically deployed in loose skirmish order enabling them to traverse broken ground with speed. O'Neill's pike were unarmoured and deployed in open order, maximising their tactical flexibility and speed. Irish combat effectiveness was dependent on firepower. They had not slavishly copied modernising trends but adapted them, creating a hybrid force which used firepower as the primary means to gain battlefield superiority, while maintaining their exceptional mobility.

From the start of the war English units proved incapable of marching at speed and were reluctant to fight away from the perceived safety of tracks or roads. The Irish were quick to take the advantage, using bogs and woods as safe lines of retreat during attacks on English convoys.[3] Sir Ralph Lane, the muster-master in Ireland, warned of this in 1598. He noted there was a shortage of competent officers and a general lack of martial skill to fight in bogs and passes.[4] English forces had proved themselves effective in Europe; indeed the reinforcements sent with Essex were trained in the new and innovative methods of warfare devised by Maurice of Nassau.[5] Why were they so slow and ineffective in comparison to their Irish adversaries?

The structure of the Crown's forces was a major impediment to their mobility. As armies grew in size during the sixteenth century, the impedimenta associated with them grew accordingly. These 'tails' comprising women, children, merchants and assorted hangers-on, could grow from 50 to 150 per cent the size of army they travelled with.[6] English marching columns in Ireland were no different; in many cases this was an understatement. When Captain Humphrey Willis entered Fermanagh in 1593 at the

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[3] The National Archive (TNA), SP 63/203, Anon [H.C.], *Dialogue of Silvynne and Peregrynne*, ff 316v-17.

[4] *CSPI,* 'The project of service by Sir Ralph Lane', 23 December 1598, vi, pp.419-21.

[5] J. A. de Moor, 'Experience and experiment: some reflections upon the military developments in 16th and 17th century Western Europe' in Marco Van der Hoeven (ed.), *Exercise of arms: warfare in the Netherlands, 1568-1648,* (Leiden, Brill, 1997), pp.25-6.

[6] Martin Van Creveld, *Supplying war: logistics from Wallenstien to Patton,* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.6.

head of 100 men, they were accompanied by 160 'women and boys'.[7] What little mobility the columns retained was further diminished if their commander had the poor sense to bring artillery. Roads in Ireland were little more than rutted tracks and could be transformed into quagmire with the passage of any sizable army. Attempting to move anything but the lightest of guns could result in them becoming more of a hindrance than a help.

Individually, English troops were hampered by their personal equipment when facing the Irish. Foot companies were composed of shot, equipped with a firearm, and pikemen, in a ratio of one or two shot to each pike.[8] Of those with firearms one-quarter to one-third were armed with muskets.[9] Though powerful, muskets were too heavy for 'light services' in Ireland.[10] It was worse for English pikemen, as they were burdened with heavy armour slowing their movement.[11] When contrasted with their Irish opponents, who at most wore a helmet for protection, it was unsurprising that from 1593-1600 English troops rarely held the tactical initiative during combat in Ireland.

The Queen was poorly served by many of her high-ranking officers in the early and mid-phases of the war. English officers appeared unable to acknowledge that O'Neill's armies were not the axe wielding galloglass of the type deployed by Shane O'Neill thirty years previous. Writing after the war, Captain John Pooley believed that the failure of the Crown's officers to take account of the modernised forces and tactics being used by the Irish was responsible for their repeated defeats at the hands of the Irish.[12] This conceit was echoed at strategic and operational levels of the English war effort, as campaigns were often blunt and unsophisticated applications of military power. This dogmatic approach culminated in the devastating defeat of the crown's main field army

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[7] British Library (BL), Cotton Titus C/VII, 'Sir Henry Wallop's relation of the progress of Tyrone's rebellion', 1600, f. 156.

[8] C. G. Cruickshank, *Elizabeth's Army*, 2nd edn., (London, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1966), pp.114-5.

[9] Cyril Falls, *Elizabeth's Irish wars,* (London, Methuen, 1950), p.39.

[10] Lambeth Palace Archives (Lambeth), Carew Papers, MS 614, 'Sir John Dowdall to Sir Robert Cecil', 2 January 1600, f. 267.

[11] Henry J. Webb, *Elizabethan military science: the books and the practice,* (London, University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p.90.

[12] Trinity College Dublin (TCD), MS 10837, 'Texts relating to Lord Essex in Ireland and the Battle of the Yellow Ford, by John Pooley', 1638, p.44.

(4,000 foot and 350 horse) at the Battle of the Yellow Ford in August 1598.[13] The disaster on the Blackwater was quickly followed by the overthrow of the Munster plantation. In a matter of days a popular insurrection of the Irish peasantry swept away an English plantation 15 years in the making.[14] It was with this backdrop that the queen turned to her court favourite and the hero of Cadiz, Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex.

Essex arrived in Ireland in April 1599, where reinforcements had swollen the crown army to unprecedented levels; over 17,000 men with assurances of 2,000 more every three months.[15] The Queen expected Essex to concentrate his efforts on assaulting O'Neill in Ulster, but instead he marched through Muster, achieving little of lasting consequence.[16] Essex's failure was compounded by military defeat in Wicklow, Offaly and Connacht.[17] Essex finally met O'Neill near Ardee, County Louth on 3 September, but outnumbered and ravaged by disease his army was in no state to fight, therefore Essex negotiated a six month ceasefire.[18] The Queen was highly critical of the cessation, both of the terms of the agreement and the secretive nature of the negotiations.[19] Fearful of the Queen's tone and intrigues by his enemies in the English court, Essex sailed for England on 24 September. He never returned as his abortive coup led to Essex's execution in February 1601.

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[13] TNA SP 63/202, pt. 3, 'The ill news out of Ireland', 14 August 1598, f. 28.

[14] A. J. Sheehan, 'The overthrow of the Plantation of Munster in October 1598' in *Irish Sword*, Vol. xv (1982), pp.11-22.

[15] *CSPI,* The Privy Council to the Earl of Essex, 17 April 1599, viii, pp.13-4.

[16] *CSPI*, Sir John Brooke to Cecil, 5 July 1599, viii, pp.78-9; Hatfield House Archive, Cecil Papers 186/159, William Udall to Queen Elizabeth I, c. October 1599,.

[17] Essex to the Privy Council, 13 July 1599, *Calendar of the manuscripts of the Marquess of Salisbury: preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire*. R. A. Roberts, E. Salisbury, G. Montague and O. Geraint Dyfnallt (eds.), 24 vols, (London, HMSO, 1883-1976), Vol. ix, pp.231-2; *CSPI*, Sir Henry Harrington to Adam Loftus, 29 May 1599, viii, pp.58-9; TNA., SP 63/205, 'A note on the army under the command of Sir Conyers Clifford, at the Curlews', 5 August 1599, f. 247; John O'Donovan (ed. and trans.), *Annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters*, 2nd ed., 7 vols (Dublin, Hodges Smith and Co., 1856), Vol. vi, p.2133 (henceforth cited as *AFM.*).

[18] *CSPI,* 'Journal of the Lord Lieutenant's proceedings in the north, from 28th August till the 8th of September', 8 September 1599, viii, pp.144-7.

[19] The Queen to Essex, 17 September 1599, *Calendar of the Carew manuscripts preserved in the archiepiscopal library at Lambeth, 1551-1642*, eds. J. S. Brewer and William Bullen, iii, 6 vols (London, HMSO,1867-73), pp.325-7 (henceforth cited as *Carew MSS*).

The truce with O'Neill held, but the morale of the English army in Ireland was at low ebb and the Crown controlled little beyond the walls of the fortified towns. With this backdrop, Charles Blount, eighth Baron Mountjoy was made Lord Deputy of Ireland in November 1599, taking up office in February 1600. Mountjoy had less practical military experience than his predecessor; indeed Essex had remarked that Mountjoy's skill was limited to that of a captain, but he had seen service in the Low Countries (1585-6), the Armada emergency (1588), Brittany (1593) and the Azores cruise (1597). More significantly Mountjoy had no experience of war in Ireland, but he was tutored by one of the finest English officers of the period, Sir John Norreys, who served in Ireland from 1573-5.[20] Mountjoy's study of military manuals and classical texts may have guided him in his approach to the Irish wars as he retained an interest in military theory and took a copy of Julius Cesar's *Gallic Wars* with him when he went to Ireland.[21] A feature of the classical texts was the use of spoliation and devastation to overcome enemies in preference to direct attack.[22] One of the most copied classical texts on warfare was *De re militari* by Vegetius.[23] One of Vegetius' general rules of war was to subdue an enemy by famine, raids and terror rather than battle.[24] Furthermore, war against rebels allowed any and all actions beyond any codes on conduct in war. In 1584 Balthazar Ayala declared that 'a war waged by a prince with rebels is a most just one, and that all measures are allowed'.[25] Thomas Churchyard's *A generall rehearsall of warres* was

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[20] J. Stowe, *Annales, or general chronicle of England* (London, 1631), p.805; John S. Nolan, *Sir John Norreys and the Elizabethan military world,* (Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 1997), pp.240-8.

[21] Sir Robert Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia or Observations on the late Queen Elizabeth, her times and favourites,* (London, 1641), p.38; John McGurk, 'Terrain and conquest 1600-1603' in Padráig Lenihan (ed.), *Conquest and resistance: war in seventeenth century Ireland,* (Leiden, Brill, 2001), p.96.

[22] H. J. Edwards, trans., *Caesar: the Gallic wars* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1917), p.375.

[23] Charles R. Shrader, 'The influence of Vegetius' *De re militari*' in *Military Affairs*, Vol. xlv, Iss. 4 (1981), p.168; *De re militari* was translated and printed in London in 1572. See John Sadler, trans., *The foure books of Flavius Vegetius Renatus,* (London, 1572).

[24] Flavius Vegetius Renatus, *Vegetius: epitome of military science*, trans. N. P. Milner, (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1996), p.116.

[25] Quoted in Geoffrey Parker, 'Early modern Europe' in Michael Howard, George Andreopoulous and Mark Shulman (eds.), *The laws of war: constrains on warfare in the western world,* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994), p.44.

unambiguous when dealing with Irish affairs, noting 'whensoever he made any hosting, or inroad, into the enemies country, he killed man, woman, and child, and spoiled, wasted, and burned, by the ground all that he might: leaving nothing of the enemies in safety'.[26] Seventeen years later Edmund Spenser advocated famine as a means to suppress the Irish.[27]

Mountjoy may have been influenced by his reading habits as this strategy was a principal component of Mountjoy's plan to defeat O'Neill, but the experience of his tutor Norreys and the conduct of war on the continent must have guided his methods. Norreys had slaughtered Scots civilians on Rathlin Island in 1575 and participated in Essex's spoiling in Antrim, creating what Nolan described as 'protective zones of devastation'.[28] In Europe devastation had long been used as means secure victory. Contrary to the claim that Mountjoy's campaign was exceptionally harsh, starvation, devastation and brutality was intrinsic to contemporary warfare, especially against rebels.[29] Systematic crop destruction was deployed in Granada in 1483 and the devastation of Provence in 1536, but extending back to the medieval period, scorched earth tactics repeatedly occurred as the principal means to realise military success.[30] The Duke of Alba deployed scorched earth tactics in response to the revolt in the Low Countries leading to the collapse of Dutch resistance. Indeed, Sir Roger Williams considered his replacement a mistake as 'fury and resolution well used or executed, had been the only ways to suppress that [Dutch] nation'.[31]

Mountjoy landed in Dublin on 27 February 1600. As Essex before him, he received guidance on how best to deal with O'Neill.[32] The anonymous advisor was clear that

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[26] Thomas Churchyard, *A generall rehearsall of warres, called Churchyardes choise*, (London, 1579), Q. iii.

[27] Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (eds), *Edmund Spenser, A View of the present State of Ireland (1633): from the first printed edition,* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 101-2.

[28] Nolan, *Sir John Norreys*, pp. 29-30. Mountjoy focused on creating two sterile zones; south-Cork and east-Tyrone.

[29] John McGurk, 'The pacification of Ulster, 1600-3' in David Edwards, Pádraig Lenihan and Clodagh Tait (eds), *Age of atrocity: violence and political conflict in early modern Ireland* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2007), p. 128.

[30] J. R. Hale, *War and society in Renaissance Europe 1450-1620*, (Stroud, Strutton Publishing, 1998), p.184.

[31] John Evans (ed.), *The works of Sir Roger Williams*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 141-2.

[32] *CSPI*, 'Instructions for Lord Mountjoy', January 1600, viii, pp. 440-7.

prosecution of the Irish by the sword was inseparable from the spilling of blood, and, in that regard Mountjoy's campaigns would not disappoint, but first he had to reform the army in Ireland. Mountjoy had significantly fewer troops than to Essex, just 14,000 foot and 1,200 horse dispersed in garrisons and suffering from low morale. Before risking any action, Mountjoy took steps to reform and invigorate the army. He rebuilt the army by restoring its confidence, enabling troops to leave the relative safety of their garrisons and challenge the Irish for supremacy in the field. Veteran officers dismissed by Essex were reinstated, while other 'idle drones' were cashiered.[33] The sale of captaincies was outlawed, absentee officers constrained and more commissioners were recruited to curtail fraudulent musters.[34]

There was a new emphasis on training and improving the soldier's individual weapons skills. Officers were required to regularly train and discipline their men 'for their better experience and health'.[35] The proportion of gunpowder issued to troops was doubled for their first month in Ireland, to permit sufficient practise in discharging their weapons; more importantly soldiers would not be charged for the powder they used in the field.[36] Mountjoy's reforms were effective but he was not prepared to casually throw troops into action. The army was used warily at first and care taken not to expose the soldiers to defeat, thereby preserving their new-found but potentially brittle morale.[37] Sufficient and timely shipments of supplies were the foundation of the army's rejuvenation, therefore ample provisions were ordered to rebuild the Crown's battered army. Just two months after Mountjoy's arrival the English army was 'better fashioned to follow the service with cheerfulness and resolution'.[38] In the same month

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[33] *CSPI,* 'The heads of those things wherein I [Mountjoy] am touched by Her Majesty or the Lords in their several letters in the course of my government, together with the several answers made by Sir Oliver St. John unto them, as he shall find occasion in speech, either with Her Majesty or with their Lordships', 27 October 1600, ix, pp.501-10.

[34] Ibid.

[35] *Carew MSS,* 'The army at Lough Foyle', 29 September 1600, iii, pp. 455-6.

[36] *CSPI,* Mountjoy to the Privy Council, ix, pp.349-53.

[37] Fynes Moryson, *An itinerary: containing his ten years travel through the twelve dominions of Germany, Bohmerland, Switzerland, Netherland, Denmark, Poland, Italy, Turkey, France, England and Ireland,* 4 vols (Glasgow, Glasgow University Press1907-8), Vol ii, p.2 68 (henceforth cited as *Itinerary*).

[38] *CSPI,* Mountjoy and the council to the Privy Council, 1 April 1600, ix, pp. 66-7.

Mountjoy declared that his men 'desire nothing more than to fight'.[39] Mountjoy's rehabilitated army was ready by mid-June. He advised Cecil that the forces were in strength and health and that they could repay 'the milk we have received from the estate with the blood of our enemies or our own'.[40] With sufficient supplies Mountjoy implemented a new plan against the Irish; sustained and unrelenting prosecution of the war regardless of season.

Mobility was the key to effectively engaging the Irish, therefore Mountjoy's army reforms enabled mobile, high-tempo campaigns. As a result calivers, which were better suited to skirmishing, were issued to a greater proportion of the infantry. Furthermore, soldiers started to abandon their heavy armour. The troops landed on the Foyle in May 1600 considered armour unnecessary and in Muster Sir George Carew fielded troops described as 'light foot'.[41] This evolution continued to the point whereby in August 1602, Carew believed that infantry deployed by the Crown in Ireland were significantly lighter and more mobile than the heavy infantry of the Spanish.[42]

Lightening the loads of soldiers improved individual mobility, but Mountjoy made changes to the supplies and even the infrastructure of the military campaigns to maximise operational agility. Often the Irish carried their provisions in knapsacks, eschewing slow-moving baggage trains.[43] Mountjoy issued orders barring soldiers from bringing dependants on campaigns, and food was restricted to biscuit, cheese and

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[39] *CSPI*, Mountjoy to the Privy Council, 15 April 1600, ix, pp.91-3.

[40] *CSPI*, Mountjoy to Cecil, 19 June 1600, ix, pp. 252-4.

[41] TNA, SP 63/207 pt. 6, Captain Humphrey Covert to Cecil, December 1600, f. 285; TNA, SP 63/207 pt. 5, 'Captain Richard Greame's letter and the other captains and officers to the president of Munster', 17 September 1600, f. 78.

[42] Thomas Stafford, *Pacata Hibernia: Ireland appeased and reduced, or a history of the late wares of Ireland, especially in the province of Munster under the command of Sir George Carew*, ed. Standish O'Grady, 2 vols (London, Downey and Co.,1896), Vol. ii, pp.255-6 (henceforth cited as *Pacata Hibernia*).

[43] Lughaidh Ó Clérigh, *The life of Aodh Ruadh O' Domhnaill*, part 1, ed. and trans. Paul Walsh, (London, The Irish Texts Society, 1948), p.20, (henceforth cited as *Life*); Nicholas Dawtry, 'A booke of questions and answers concerning the wars or rebellions of the kingdome of Irelande', ed. Hiram Morgan, *Analecta Hibernica*, xxxvi (1995), p.96, (henceforth cited as *Q&A*).

butter as they were 'more portable for service'. [44] Mountjoy requested that greater amounts of cheese from England, as it was one of the few provisions which could be carried by soldiers.[45]

Reform of the army was a first step, but Mountjoy needed a new all-Ireland strategy to defeat O'Neill. He identified the Irish midlands as the key territory on which O'Neill's island-wide success depended. O'Neill's southern allies greatly outnumbered the English, but they depended on Ulster for munitions.[46] O'Neill and O'Donnell monopolised the supply of gunpowder and still there was never enough to meet the insatiable demands of O'Neill's armies in Ulster.[47] Predictably, the situation was more precarious with his allies two hundred miles south.

Sir Henry Docwra's landing of 4,000 troops in Derry during May 1600, deep in O'Neill's hinterlands, forced the earl to withdraw some of his troops north. Subsequently, Mountjoy focused his first summer campaign on counties Westmeath, Offaly and Laois; interdicting the land routes from Ulster through to Munster and precipitating defections of prominent Irish families, cutting the north-south lines of communication.[48] O'Neill's command of the Irish lords in Munster and Leinster diminished as his control was previously predicated on regular supplies of troops and munitions.[49] Furthermore, isolation of the south from gunpowder out of Ulster fundamentally compromised the combat power of the new Irish infantry which relied on firepower. Without an adequate supply of gunpowder prolonged skirmishing, which had proved so successful in the past, was not an option. O'Neill's southern allies had to use their pikes

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[44] Lambeth, MS 614, 'Laws and orders of war established for the good conduct of the service of Ireland, by Lord Mountjoy', 1600, f. 216; TNA, SP 63/207 pt. 2, Carew and the council of Munster to the Privy Council, 30 April 1600, f. 359.

[45] *CSPI*, Mountjoy and council to the Privy Council, 14 June 1601, x, pp.381-5.

[46] *CSPI*, Carew to the Privy Council, 30 August 1600, ix, pp.387-9; *Pacata Hibernia*, i, pp.189-90, 202-3.

[47] *CSPI*, 'A brief declaration of the state wherein Ireland now standeth' 1599, viii, pp.365-70; TNA, SP 63/209 pt. 1, 'Articles of advertisements to be preferred to the right honourable James [Fitzthomas], Earl of Desmond', 13 August 1601, f. 78.

[48] TNA, SP 63/207 pt. 5, 'Note for Mr. Secretary [Cecil] touching Leinster', September 1600, f. 220; *CSPI,* Mountjoy and council to the Privy Council, 11 December 1600, x, pp.55-7.

[49] *CSPI,* As seen in a reference to Phelim MacFeagh O'Byrne in Ormond to Sir Thomas Norreys, 9 November 1597vi, pp.446-7.

offensively; a role for which they were neither trained nor experienced.[50] From 1600 onwards, whenever the Irish engaged in melee combat they were repeatedly defeated.

A major component of Mountjoy's new approach was the systematic destruction of crops to create famine. From the outset of the war Irish confederates engaged in spoiling and raiding to gather resources, incite rebellion, intimidate local chiefs and assert political domination by the confederate leaders. Both sides engaged in scorched earth tactics, but Mountjoy made it a primary means to compel submissions. Just as Mountjoy's campaigns were getting under way, Sir John Dowdall wrote 'When the plough and breeding of cattle shall cease, then will the rebellion end'.[51] The decision to engage in a campaign of fire-and-sword was not an attempt to kill civilians (like Humphrey Gilbert's bloody suppression of the Desmond revolt), but an assault on the Irish economy and O'Neill's ability to finance the war. Mountjoy recognised that the harvest generated the money used to maintain the Irish war effort. Less corn meant less money for O'Neill's to pay his soldiers. Furthermore, as the Crown's forces pushed further into Ulster in 1602, Mountjoy hoped the resulting shortages would force O'Neill to live off others, leaving him vulnerable to betrayal.[52]

During the seven years of war preceding Mountjoy's appointment, Crown military campaigns were intermittent and reactive, punctuated by lengthy ceasefires. Mountjoy rejected this on-off style of war and engaged in year-round campaigning. This high-tempo approach became characteristic of Crown operations for the rest of the war and had a telling effect on the Irish lords. A veteran officer of the wars reported that the Irish spoke among themselves of Mountjoy's incessant action and of how no other had fought like this before.[53] By March 1601 it was reported that the Irish were 'greatly daunted … wrought by the Lord Deputy his continual prosecution and sudden incursions'.[54]

While increasing the frequency of expeditions, Mountjoy reversed the traditional campaigning seasons by concentrating his attacks during winter and also the planting and harvesting seasons.[55] The Irish commonly used woods as cover; therefore

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[50] TNA, SP 63/210, 'The progress of my [Thomas Douglas] services since I arrived in Ireland on 17 March', 1601, f. 192.
[51] *CSPI*, Sir John Dowdall to the Pricy Council, 7 March 1600, ix, pp.22-4.
[52] Lambeth, MS. 604, Mountjoy to the Privy Council, 9 August 1602, f. 206.
[53] TNA, SP 63/208 pt. 1, Captain Humphrey Willis to Cecil, 24 January 1601, f. 44.
[54] *CSPI*, Sir Theobald Dillon to Cecil, 25 March 1601, x, pp.239-40.
[55] *Itinerary*, ii, pp.270-1.

operations in winter enabled Mountjoy to pursue his enemies now deprived of concealment by foliage. Expeditions during spring prevented the sowing of crops and follow-up attacks in early autumn destroyed the harvest where it could be found.[56] English forces occupied the pastures on which O'Neill depended upon to feed his herds of cattle, instead of vainly perusing them through the wooded fastness.[57] Denied access to grazing land, O'Neill was obliged to feed cattle on his stockpiles of corn.[58]

Mountjoy recognised that war was not just a matter of fighting; it was a contest of economic power and it was a key advantage the Crown held over O'Neill. The English economy was far larger than the Irish, therefore Mountjoy's access to materials and men was greater than O'Neill's. Mountjoy made the war a trial of resources; by keeping his forces in the field, he forced O'Neill to reciprocate, compelling the Irish to expend money and supplies. The cost and logistical burden was one which Mountjoy could longer endure. Sir George Carey related how the Lord Deputy's march to the Ulster borders had made O'Neill maintain his forces in opposition 'which will spend and weaken him [O'Neill] very much'.[59]

Material wealth and abundant supply may have underpinned Mountjoy's persistent campaigning, but it was English naval power which enabled it. Problems with supplies had dogged the English war effort, but by 1601 frequent shipments were having a significant effect. Humphrey Willis claimed the Irish were becoming disheartened fighting with an enemy who could land 70 ships at one time while in the same period the Irish had only received two ships from Spain.[60] O'Neill had nothing to counter English naval superiority. This was dramatically emphasised when over 4,000 English troops landed in Lough Foyle on 14 May 1600. The force under Sir Henry Docwra made its main base at the old ecclesiastic site at Derry.[61] Progress was slow, but the decisive blow was political. The garrison was a catalyst for the defection of disaffected

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[56] *CSPI*, Sir Henry Docwra to the Privy Council, 24 May 1600, ix, pp.194-8.

[57] *Itinerary*, iii, p.178.

[58] *CSPI*, 'Intelligence from the North; in the handwriting of Sir George Carey', 9 July 1600, ix, pp.305-6.

[59] *CSPI*, Sir George Carey to Cecil, 21 May 1601, x, pp.351-2.

[60] *CSPI*, Willis to Cecil, 24 January 1601, x, pp.158-61.

[61] William Kelly, *Docwra's Derry: A narration of events in north-west Ulster* (Belfast, Ulster Historical Foundation, 2003), pp.43-4.

Irish lords, without whom little would have been achieved.[62] The Foyle landings curtailed Irish operations in the south, as O'Neill attempted to secure his formerly safe rear areas.

Small riverine craft helped bring the war into O'Neill's heartlands. Lough Neagh covers 392 square kilometres in the centre of Ulster with nine rivers flowing in and out. Sir Arthur Chichester built a small flotilla of boats which operated out of the Massarine Fort on the north-eastern shore the lough. He engaged in a series of amphibious raids across the lough during May 1601 and into 1602, which burnt and spoiled districts in Tyrone, Armagh and Derry.[63] Beyond their physical impact, the attacks affected those under O'Neill's protection. Failure to defend his territories undermined O'Neill's authority, where that authority was based on perceptions of his power and military strength.

Mountjoy paid special attention to clearing roads and opening new route ways. Improved land communications helped secure newly won territory and expedited the delivery of supplies to forces in the field. They also facilitated Mountjoy's plan for mounting fast-paced operations as 'the greatest service here is to be done with long and sudden journeys'.[64] A key feature of the 1601 Ulster campaign was to force 'submittees to cut down passes … by which hitherto the army has received most distress'.[65] Construction of large numbers of fortified posts in Ulster further improved English mobility. Part of Mountjoy's pacification plan for Ulster called for a network of forts surrounding O'Neill's lands and those of his adherents.[66] The garrisons in Ulster were close enough to provide mutual support if threatened, and able to concentrate their forces to mount larger expeditions.[67] The network of forts also enabled English units to march without recourse to baggage. Garrison troops could operate for short periods, perhaps 48 hours, independent of their stores.[68] Freed from their carriages, the English forces attained the operational agility demanded by Mountjoy.[69]

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[62] Hiram Morgan, 'Mission comparable? : The Lough Foyle and Kinsale landings of 1600 and 1601' in Hiram Morgan (ed.), *The Battle of Kinsale,* (Bray, Wordwell, 2004), p.82.

[63] *CSPI*, Sir Arthur Chichester to Cecil, 15 May 1601, x, pp.332-5.

[64] *Itinerary*, ii, p.395.

[65] *CSPI*, Fenton to Cecil, 19 May 1601, x, p.346.

[66] *Itinerary*, ii, p.269, later described by Moryson as 'some little keep of stone', idem., p.394.

[67] McGurk, 'Terrain and conquest', pp.95-9.

[68] *Q&A*, p.101.

[69] *CSPI,* Mountjoy and council to the Privy Council, 14 June 1601, x, pp.381-5.

Despite the progress made by Mountjoy during the spring and summer of 1600, the Lord Deputy came under huge pressure to produce rapid and discernible results. A letter from the Privy Council in July disparaged the Lord Deputy's efforts, noting that 'few or none of you have done your own particular duties'.[70] Pressure from England may have driven the Lord Deputy to unwisely attempt O'Neill's defences in the Moyry Pass during September-October 1600, losing perhaps half his force in the rain and mud of the Ulster borderlands.[71] Moreover, impatience may have compelled the Crown to take more desperate measures; in May 1601 the Crown debased the coinage in Ireland. Years of war had cost the Crown far more than could be paid for by taxation.[72] Old money was decried and new coins minted of base metal, which had significantly less intrinsic worth than the coins' face value. The Crown intended to raise more money to pay its debts in Ireland, but more importantly this was a direct attack on the cash economy of the Irish.

Seven years of success had left O'Neill in control of much of the countryside and its agriculture. The purchase of commodities from the Irish by merchants in the towns resulted in most of the available coin in Ireland ending up in confederate hands. The Privy Council reported that 'the rebel hath more coin than the subject'.[73] This money paid for imported arms and munitions.[74] The drain of English sterling to foreign markets also damaged the English economy as a whole.[75] The debasement's purpose was clear; saving money and drawing gold and silver out of Ireland 'as a consequence of that, that the rebel robbed of his fine moneys, shall have no means to use commerce with other

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[70] The Privy Council to Mountjoy, 17 Jul 1600, in *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, J. R. Dasent (ed.), 32 vols, (London, HMSO, 1890-1907), Vol. xxx, pp.506-15 (henceforth cited *APC*)

[71] G. A. Hayes-McCoy, 'The defence of the Moyry Pass', in *Irish Sword*, iii, no. 1 (1957-8), pp 32-8.

[72] C. E. Challis, *The Tudor coinage*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1978), p.268.

[73] *APC,* Privy Council to Mountjoy, Robert Gardiner, Chief Justices of Her Majesty's bench and Fenton, 3 March 1601, xxxi, pp.197-8.

[74] TNA, SP 63/209 pt. 2, 'Discourse on the standard of Ireland', 1601, f. 354.

[75] Joseph McLaughlin, 'What base coin wrought: the effects of the Elizabethan debasement in Ireland' in Morgan, *The Battle of Kinsale*, p.195.

nations...and so of necessity grow weak'.[76] Debasement was not met with universal approval. Some believed the move would severely damage the economy of the loyal subjects, by causing inflation and inhibiting overseas trade, while others though it may encourage the Irish to think they had emptied English coffers.[77]

Nevertheless, the Crown enacted the measures on 20 May 1601.[78] Cecil was adamant that the debasement was necessary, as any new taxation to finance the war 'would have brought upon us little better than a rebellion in this kingdom'.[79] Problems soon arose as officers reported difficulties purchasing supplies locally.[80] Merchants abused the system; buying base coins cheaply, then changing them for Sterling at the exchange for substantial profits.[81] Moreover, inflation on some Irish goods was at 100 percent in November 1602 and by the start of 1603, the Mayor of Dublin reported that overseas trade had effectively stopped.[82] Financially, the debasement proved to a dismal failure with little or no benefit to the Exchequer.[83] The critical accomplishment of the debasement was the damage caused to the confederate war economy. Due to a total absence of Irish records this is impossible to quantify, but the measures significantly curtailed the supply of ready cash to O'Neill and his allies.[84] Internationally acceptable currency drained out of the Irish market at the same time as Mountjoy assaulted O'Neill's agricultural base. Denied cash and crops, O'Neill's ability to import goods

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[76] *CSPI*, 'Questions upon the benefits growing by making base money', December 1600, x, p.127 and TNA, SP 63/207 pt. 6, f. 335.

[77] *CSPI*, Sir Oliver St. John to Cecil, 27 March 1602, xi, p.355; Lambeth, MS 604, Carew to Cecil, 11 May 1601, f. 161.

[78] Joseph McLaughlin, 'New light on Richard Hadsor II: Richard Hadsor "Discourse" on the Irish state, 1604' in *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. xxx, Iss. 119 (1997), p.338; TNA, SP 63/208 pt. 2, 'Proclamation concerning the new moneys for Ireland', 20 May 1601, f. 231.

[79] *Carew MSS*, Cecil to Mountjoy, 19 October 1601, iv, pp.153-6.

[80] *CSPI*, Docwra to the Privy Council, 2 September 1601, xi, pp.45-6; *CSPI,* Chichester to Cecil, 8 Oct 1601, xi, pp.110-12.

[81] Lambeth, MS 607, 'The exchange: proclamation by the queen', 24 January 1602[3] f. 244.

[82] *CSPI,* Mountjoy and council to Privy Council, 10 November 1602, xi, pp.512-6; *CSPI*, The mayor [John Tirrell] and sheriffs of Dublin to Cecil', 7 January 1603, xi, p.551.

[83] Challis, *Tudor coinage*, pp.272-3.

[84] *CSPI*, Thomas Hayes to Cecil, 1602, xi, pp.543-4; Lambeth, MS 607, 'The exchange: proclamation by the queen', 24 January 1603, f. 244.

declined. Writing after the war, Philip O'Sullivan Beare considered the debasement as one of the crucial factors in defeating O'Neill.[85]

O'Neill had created an unprecedented confederation of Irish lordships, but the bonds which held it together were not as robust as O'Neill would have wished. During the height of Irish success in 1599, Sir William Warren noted that faction within the confederates was their principal weakness.[86] Antagonism existed due to long-standing disputes pertaining to assertions of overlordship and rival claims to chieftaincies. Mountjoy aggravated these tensions to fragment O'Neill's network of alliances.[87] Discord was sown in open succession disputes. Mountjoy encouraged Lord Dunsany to 'blow fire' between rival claimants to the O'Rourke and Maguire lordships in Leitrim and Fermanagh.[88] Targeted assassinations generated dynastic turmoil within the Irish lordships. George Darcy and George Gernon received £100 to 'cut off the head' of one of the MacMahon lords; an act which resulted in localised infighting in Monaghan, as opposing Irish claimants fought over the now-vacant title.[89]

Mountjoy's efforts met with striking success and the Crown's fortunes steadily improved through 1600-1. In Munster the Deputy was ably served by the new Governor, Sir George Carew. In less than one year, Carew's pragmatic approach to war using brutality, mercy, diplomacy, deception and bribery, pacified most of the province. Carew managed this without having to fight a single large engagement. O'Neill was assailed on all sides during 1601. Mountjoy attacked Ulster from the south, Docwra raided Tyrone from Derry and Sir Arthur Chichester made punishing advances from Antrim and Carrickfergus. However, when the long-awaited Spanish landed at Kinsale on 2 October 1601, Mountjoy marched south to meet them.

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[85] Philip O'Sullivan Beare, *Ireland under Elizabeth: chapters towards a history of Ireland under Elizabeth*, trans. M. J. Byrne (Dublin, 1903) p.57.

[86] *CSPI*, Sir William Warren to Cecil, 5 December 1599, viii, pp.305-7.

[87] *CSPI*, Mountjoy to Cecil, 4 July 1600, ix, pp.299-302.

[88] *CSPI*, Mountjoy to Cecil, 16 July 1600, ix, pp.306-7.

[89] TNA, SP 63/207 pt.3, 'Concordatums paid in the government of the Lord Mountjoy, between the 1 of February and 20 April 1600', 13 May 1600, ff. 92-4; TNA, SP 63/207 pt. 2, Sir Francis Stafford to Cecil, 28 April 1600, f. 352.

Don Juan del Águila had landed with almost 4,000 men but by 27 October Mountjoy had encamped one mile north of Kinsale, containing the Spanish within the town.[90] Substantial shipments of supplies and reinforcements from England maintained the winter siege, but the cost in manpower was horrendous, with possibly 6,000 men dying in the frozen trenches around the town.[91] Having awaited a Spanish army since 1596 O'Neill was obliged to come to the aid of his long-anticipated allies. O'Neill gathered an army of 5,000 men to link up with Águila and at the end of December moved to break the siege but the plan failed catastrophically. Mountjoy met with the Irish several miles west of Kinsale on Christmas Eve. Though outnumbered possibly three-to-one, the English destroyed the Irish formations, and routed the Irish before they could link up with the Spanish in Kinsale. [92]

There was little O'Neill could do with his shattered army. With approximately 1,000 men killed and many hundreds captured the decision was taken to retreat north. Attacked by erstwhile allies, O'Neill lost another 2,000 men during the withdrawal to Ulster. In Kinsale Águila capitulated on terms on 2 January 1602. The cost in men and materiel during the Kinsale campaign was appalling for English and Irish alike but the defeat shattered O'Neill's reputation. This proved critical in a society where loyalty was predicated on perceptions of military power.

The defeat at Kinsale broke the Irish confederacy, but fears of a renewed Spanish landing in 1602 forced Mountjoy to commit resources to reinforcing the vulnerable southern coast.[93] Defences of coastal ports and towns in Munster were strengthened and rearmed with artillery to repel any future Spanish attack.[94] Even with his military strength stretched the length of Ireland Mountjoy's campaign in Ulster was brutally effective. O'Neill found his lands under attack from three directions; Docwra out of Derry in the north-west, Chichester from Masserine and Carrickfergus in the east and Mountjoy from the south-west in Armagh. Crop destruction and spoiling continued

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[90] Henry Mangan, 'Del Aguila's defence of Kinsale (1601-1602)' in *Irish Sword*, Vol. i (1952), pp.218-9.

[91] TNA, SP 63/211, 'Considerations of what is fittest to be done, if the Spaniards land in Ireland', June 1602, f. 200.

[92] For a thorough examination of the battle see Hiram Morgan, 'Disaster at Kinsale' in Morgan., *The Battle of Kinsale*, pp.101-46.

[93] *CSPI*, Mountjoy to Cecil, 21 May 1602, xi, pp.391-3.

[94] *Itinerary*, iii, pp.196-7; *CSPI*, Mountjoy and council to the English Privy Council, 28 April 1602, xi, pp.377-81.

causing many of O'Neill's adherents to surrender.[95] The general assault on the Irish countryside and its population led to cases of extreme brutality and in some cases even drew censure from the Lord Deputy himself, as he believed unnecessarily harsh methods prolonged the war in Connacht.[96] However, Mountjoy persecuted the war to its utmost, writing in July 1602 that 'we do now continually hunt all their woods, spoil their corn, burn their houses'.[97] Under pressure from north and south, O'Neill withdrew to the thickly wooded fastness of Glenconkyne.

In recent years studies of Mountjoy's methods have suggested that the levels of violence inflicted upon the Irish civilians was more brutal than the accepted norms in contemporary Europe. John McGurk has suggested that the slaughter of non-combatants 'was perpetrated on a scale hardly paralleled elsewhere in Europe at that time'.[98] Moreover the continuity between Mountjoy and the bloody excesses of Sir Humphrey Gilbert during the First Desmond Rebellion (1569-73) is clearly implied. However, brutally harsh measures were frequently articulated by commanders in Europe; more so against populations considered to be in rebellion. France was wracked by a series of religious wars from 1562-98, from which came the *Commentaires* of Blaise de Monluc. He believed severity and cruelty to be essential in the conduct of war, specifically in the suppression of rebellion.[99] During his passage through Guyenne in 1562 Monluc boasted that his route could be traced by the bodies hanging from trees lining the roads.[100] The Duke of Alba counselled that the Dutch revolt could only be put down with force, without 'mildness, negotiations or talks, until everything has been flattened. That will be the right time for negotiation.'[101]

The war was disastrous for the agricultural economy of Ulster. The combined effects of crop destruction by the crown, the demands of O'Neill war effort and a generally

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[95] TNA, SP 63/211, Mountjoy to the Privy Council, 29 July 1602, f. 278; TNA, SP 63/211, 'The names of the submittees', July 1602, f. 281.
[96] *Itinerary*, iii, pp.214-6.
[97] *Carew MSS*, Mountjoy to Carew, 2 July 1602, iv, pp.263-4.
[98] McGurk, 'The pacification of Ulster', p.126.
[99] Charles Cotton (trans.), *The commentaries of Messire Blaize de Montluc* (London, 1674), p.218.
[100] A. W. Evans, *Blaise de Monluc* (Chicago, F. G. Browne & Co., 1913), p.54.
[101] Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (London, Penguin, 1979), p.161.

poor harvest across Ireland resulted in a catastrophic subsistence crisis.[102] Recent studies have claimed that this phase of the war was tantamount to genocide. Vincent Carey has referred to Mountjoy's strategy as 'ethnic cleansing', implying parallels between the policies of the crown in Ireland and the war crimes of the twentieth century.[103] The concept of escalating and unrestrained English brutality in Ulster has proliferated in recent years through other related genres of historical study with works such as *Blood and Soil* in which Ben Kiernan echoed much of Carey's interpretation.[104] However, the causes of the famine were more complex than an attempt by the Crown's officers to eradicate the Irish in the north. As noted above, Mountjoy's campaign was an attack on the Irish economy, not the population (though Chichester's sanguinary actions may have been). Moreover, this was not the first time famine had occurred during the war. The struggle between Sir Conyers Clifford and Hugh Roe O'Donnell in Connacht during 1597 had resulted in the collapse of agriculture in the region. Maurice Kyffin recounted how 'so may dead hungerstarven carcases of men and women lie up and down the fields and ways'.[105] Five years later in Ulster the magnitude of the disaster was even greater.

Debasement exacerbated the shortages, as rapid inflation and base coins meant merchants found it impossible to pay for imported foodstuffs.[106] The civilian population tried to escape the disaster unfolding in Ulster by migrating west to Donegal and even further afield to England, France and Spain.[107] In attempting to relieve their situation the exodus of civilians may have sealed many of their fates. Large numbers of already-weakened people interacting with soldiers and other refugees rapidly increased disease transmission rates.[108] Population fluxes during subsistence crises in Europe were the primary factors in mass mortality of civilian populations, not direct victimisation by

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[102] *Carew MSS,* Mountjoy and council to the Privy Council, 29 July 1602, iv, 282-4; *Itinerary*, iii, pp.282-3.

[103] Vincent Carey, '"What pen can paint or tears atone?" Mountjoy's scorched earth campaign', in Morgan, *The Battle of Kinsale*, pp 205-16.

[104] Ben Kiernan, *Blood and soil: a world history of genocide and extermination from Sparta to Darfur,* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2007).

[105] *CSPI,* Maurice Kyffin to Burghley, 18 May 1597, vi, 291-2.

[106] *Itinerary*, iii, p.281; *CSPI*, Mountjoy and Privy Councillors in Dublin to the English Privy Council, 26 January 1603, xi, pp 559-61.

[107] *Itinerary*, iii, pp.202, 383; *CSPI*, Chichester to earl of Salisbury [Cecil], 2 November 1605, xii, pp 345-6.

[108] Quentin Outram, 'The demographic impact of early modern warfare' in *Social Science History*, Vol. xxvi, Iss. 2 (2002), pp 245-6.

soldiers. Therefore, it is likely that the disaster in Ulster followed a similar pattern. It would be wrong to claim that the destruction of food supplies and property did not exacerbate the hardships of the local population, but it is likewise difficult to claim that Crown military operations were the sole, or even primary causative factor. The first effects of the famine were felt in the north by both the Irish and English, but the latter had some relief from imports out of England.[109] The entire island was in the grip of famine by the start of 1603. Mountjoy used food shipments from England to feed the army, remarking that all would suffer but the Irish rebels more so.[110] The crisis continued through 1603 with pestilence reported in Dublin in November and the Irish annals recording starvation throughout Ireland.[111]

There were some vocal advocates for eradicating the Irish, notably Sir Arthur Chichester who wrote 'the Queen will never reap what is expected until the [Irish] nation be wholly destroyed … being now the most treacherous infidels of the world as we have too mild spirits and consciences to be their masters'.[112] Mountjoy did not share this attitude, observing that 'multitudes of subjects is the glory of a prince, and so every way it is fittest to reclaim rather than destroy them'.[113] To provide some relief for the sufferings of rural civilians, Mountjoy made arrangements to reinstate agriculture in Armagh, thereby drawing the rural population of Tyrone south of the River Blackwater.[114] Unrelenting pressure compelled O'Neill to exhaust his resources in Tyrone. When Mountjoy finally crossed into Tyrone in June 1602 he found a region stripped bare of supplies and 'so eaten I think we can hardly live there'.[115] O'Neill had retreated to Fermanagh by August, causing Mountjoy to report that concentrations of O'Neill's forces were causing as much damage to the countryside as the Lord Deputy's

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[109] C. L. Falkiner, 'William Farmer's chronicles of Ireland from 1594 to 1613' in *English Historical Review*, Vol. xxii (1907), p.129
[110] *CSPI*, Mountjoy to Cecil, 20 January 1603, xi, pp.554-7.
[111] *CSPI*, Sir John Davies to Cecil, 1 December 1603, xii, pp.111-3; *AFM.*, vi, p.2349.
[112] *CSPI*, Chichester to Cecil, 8 October 1601, xi, pp.110-2.
[113] *Itinerary*, iii, p.215.
[114] *Itinerary*, iii, pp.208-9.
[115] TNA, SP 63/211, Mountjoy to Cecil, 23 June 1602, f. 161.

spoiling operations.[116] Though the Irish confederacy was ruined, Mountjoy could not track O'Neill down nor induce anyone to betray him.[117]

O'Neill's military could not recover, but the Irish were not the only ones feeling the strain; war weariness took its toll in England.[118] Despite the Queen's intractability regarding O'Neill's submission, Cecil advised Mountjoy to do whatever it took to secure O'Neill's surrender.[119] O'Neill finally submitted to Mountjoy at Mellifont Abbey on 30 March 1603 where he received decidedly generous terms.[120] O'Neill renounced the title of *the O'Neill*, but retained much of the territory he controlled before the war. The conflict had one final twist for O'Neill. On presenting his formal surrender in Dublin, Mountjoy told him that the Queen had died on 24 March, six days before O'Neill capitulated at Mellifont.[121] The likelihood of the Queen's death possibly proved the decisive factor in Mountjoy agreeing to such lenient terms, as O'Neill could claim that he had never been in rebellion against the new king, James I and VI.[122]

The defeat at Kinsale is often considered the pivotal turning-point of the war, but it must be viewed in context with the advances made by Mountjoy and his officers in the two years preceding the battle. While it is true that the battle broke the back of O'Neill's military and critically undermined his status with the Irish nobility, it was Mountjoy's broad-spectrum approach of economic, military and political warfare which had fatally compromised the Irish confederates' ability to recover. Seven years of defeat had brought the Tudor regime in Ireland to the point of utter collapse, as successive Governors and military officers refused to recognise that the enemy confronting them was not the disorganised and primitive hosts which had been so easily contained and then supressed by powerful, if temporary, concentrations of English military strength. Mountjoy did not repeat the mistakes of his predecessors and quickly recognised that the war as not just a trial of military strength, but also a complex interaction of political,

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[116] TNA, SP 63/212, Mountjoy to Cecil, 12 Oct 1602, f. 110.

[117] *CSPI*, Fenton to Cecil, 17 December 1602, xi, pp.533-4; *CSPI*, Mountjoy to Cecil, 8 January 1603, xi, pp.551-2; *CSPI*, Docwra to the Privy Council, 23 February 1603, xi, p.566; *Itinerary*, iii, pp.274-5.

[118] *Itinerary*, iii, p.174.

[119] *Itinerary*, iii, pp.129-32; *Carew MSS,* Cecil to Mountjoy, 18 February 1603, iv, pp.417-8.

[120] Nicholas P. Canny, 'The treaty of Mellifont and the re-organisation of Ulster, 1603' in *Irish Sword*, Vol. ix, (1969-70), pp.255-6.

[121] Ibid, pp.249-50.

[122] Ibid, p.250.

economic, cultural forces in which the army was just one, albeit major element. As it stood the army left him by Essex was not fit for purpose, therefore he was careful to reform and renew the army into a force which could challenge the Irish confederates. Mountjoy did not curse or ridicule the army's poor morale or lack of skill, but took steps to revitalise his men and underpinned this with significant improvements in supplies and logistical support.

O'Neill and his allies had achieved unprecedented levels of operational sophistication and co-operation. Mountjoy recognised this and developed a cohesive plan in which his broader strategic vision guided military expeditions rather than more limited, localised objectives. The new approach was a transformation of attitude as well as strategy. War was not just a military struggle, but a contest of economic might and the ability of the belligerents to harness and deploy it. Mountjoy knew that he had access to more money and resources than O'Neill. With foreknowledge of sustained supplies and troop reinforcements, Mountjoy made the war one of economic attrition. The English Crown had greater wealth and a larger population to draw on for manpower but by 1602 this calculation may have seemed tenuously close to failure as the ongoing costs cut deep into the resources of the state. But ultimately, where other viceroys had failed, Mountjoy secured final victory and completed the conquest of Ireland.[123]