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Scotland, Atlantic slavery and the Scottish National Party: From colonised to coloniser in the political imagination

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Abstract

Over the last three decades, a major shift has taken place in Scottish nationalist understandings of Scotland's colonial past. During the second half of the twentieth century, independence supporters viewed Scotland's relationship with England in colonial terms. Since the Scottish Parliament was established in 1999, nationalists have increasingly recognised Scots' role in Atlantic slavery. This paper explores this change within the Scottish National Party (SNP) using archival sources, published material and Scottish Parliamentary records. It demonstrates that a maturing historiography has drawn attention to Scotland's slavery past. History has become politically relevant in transatlantic deliberations over racial injustice, which have grown in intensity since the international Black Lives Matter protests in 2020. SNP ministers and parliamentarians have responded to this context by incorporating addressing Scotland's role in Atlantic slavery within a case for independence that is styled as progressive and contrasts with the more recalcitrant attitudes, which predominate at UK level.

KEYWORDS

Atlantic slavery, civic nationalism, colonialism, decolonisation, Scotland/Scottish, Scottish National Party

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Over the last three decades, an important shift has taken place within the dominant Scottish nationalist understanding of Scotland's colonial past. In 1985, a group of young left-wing activists wrote a pamphlet, which argued that the Scottish National Party (SNP) could best succeed by making *The Case for Scottish Socialism*. The lead author was Kenny MacAskill, a lawyer in his mid-twenties who had stood for the SNP in Livingston at the 1983 general election. He was also a member of the party's National Executive Committee. MacAskill et al. explained that Scotland's experience of economic and cultural peripherality within the United Kingdom and the international division of labour had conditioned a form of class-conscious socialist politics centred on conflicts between the interests of Scottish workers and multinational corporations who dominated industrial production and oil extraction. By contrast, the upper echelons of Scottish society were to be viewed with suspicion, as they had been socialised by the institutions of the Union and English cultural dominance. MacAskill et al. explained that 'by definition of the measurement of their advancement, according to alien values, the Scottish middle class had forsaken, to some extent, their Scottishness ... To an extent the Scottish middle class have become the Scottish equivalent of the old colonial overseers of the English empire and have come to represent the apprentice Englishmen of Scotland' (MacAskill et al., 1985: 7). This explicitly colonial analogy characterised the Scottish middle class as subjugating the Scottish people on behalf of absentee English masters. The vision of Scotland as an English 'colony' was dominant within the late-twentieth-century SNP.¹

Kenny MacAskill later became a Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) and served as the Cabinet Secretary for Justice under Alex Salmond in Scotland's first SNP governments between 2007 and 2014. His evolving perspective was indicative of a wider change within dominant nationalist outlooks. On 25 May 2020, George Floyd was murdered by a police officer in Minneapolis, United States, a tragedy that reignited the global Black Lives Matter movement (BLM). In response, MacAskill, then the SNP Member of UK Parliament (MP) for East Lothian, publicly called for greater acknowledgement of the distinctive Scottish role in transatlantic slavery:

Some grew fantastically wealthy as a result of it and the Scottish economy expanded consequently, even if wealth wasn't shared equally here. But many participated at a lower level ... It wasn't just in Edinburgh's New Town or Glasgow's Merchant City that the opulence and riches were invested. Large estates and houses everywhere, even in the Lothians, were paid for by slavery itself, slave labour and, perversely, compensation for ending it ... An understanding of Scotland's links with slavery is important (MacAskill, 2020)

MacAskill qualified this call by noting that some eighteenth-century Scottish colliers were held in de facto serfdom—as discussed below, this type of historical balancing is favoured by some SNP parliamentarians. Nevertheless, the shift in perspective from a nation that was colonised, to one whose people were colonisers, was striking. MacAskill's appraisal of the Union's political economy, and the benefits imperialism brought to Scotland, reveals a change in nationalist thought.

This article argues that the international intellectual climate, the historiographical landscape and anti-racist activism have underpinned a reassessment of Scotland's links to Atlantic slavery within the SNP. Those changes took place after the establishment of a Scottish Parliament in 1999, which created a platform for national deliberation on Scotland's past, present and future. This symbiosis was informed by Tom Devine's bestselling *The Scottish Nation* (Devine, 1999), which presented a materialist version of Scotland under the Union. In an appraisal of Devine's book in 2020, Richard Finlay claimed it was 'symbolic of a greater interest in Scottish history and culture' that coincided with devolution, underlining the book presented 'an unapologetic history of Scotland' (Sunday National, 2020). For nationalists, this context and subsequent debates on the role of Scots in empire over the next two decades forced a reassessment and ultimately a rejection of claims of colonial victimhood and English domination. The SNP, which has been the dominant political party for those seeking Scottish independence since it was founded in 1934, and which has been the main governing party since 2007, is at the centre of the analysis here (Lynch, 2013). However, it was broader civil society developments that shaped these reassessments.

The analysis is based on published texts and archived manuscripts relating to SNP historical and political perspectives alongside Scottish historiography. In addition, discussions in the Scottish Parliament around Atlantic slavery and abolition since 1999 have been sampled with attention to how SNP members have addressed these themes. The first section of this article reviews historical debates over theories of Scotland's role in the global economy. During the 1970s and 1980s, historical frameworks centred on competing readings of world-systems theory. Michael Hechter's assessment that 'the [English] core is seen to dominate the periphery politically and exploit it materially' supported the view that Scotland was an English colony. For Hechter, Scottish nationalism was a 'pattern of resistance to assimilation' (Hechter, 1975: 5, 9). This was never a wholly accepted position. Tom Nairn, who was Scotland's leading nationalist intellectual in the late twentieth century, put forward a diametrically opposed perspective in *The Break-Up of Britain* (1977), published 2 years after Hechter's *Internal Colonialism*. Nairn explained that it was Scotland's industrial 'overdevelopment' which explained the growth of electoral support for nationalism over the preceding decade. Imperialism had granted Scotland a leading position in the core of the world system. The prospect of independence had been enlivened by its failure to continue providing the same advantages after decolonisation (Nairn, 1977). Internal colonialism analysis had a marked influence within the SNP, but Nairn's criticisms resonated with an alternative outlook that overturned the victimhood perspective after 2000. The second section traces how Atlantic slavery has become central in Scottish historiography from the 1970s. Scottish historians have drawn increasingly bolder conclusions that much more closely resemble Nairn's perspective than Hechter's thesis, which has been repudiated. Academic historians have more recently concluded Scotland had the status of an imperial core between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, including a disproportionately sized role in Britain's Atlantic slavery economy.

The sections that follow on from this consider how historic involvement with chattel slavery has been understood in Scottish public life, focusing on nationalist perspectives. Section 3 discusses appraisals and criticisms of the steps that SNP politicians have taken to recognise the role that chattel slavery and empire played in Scotland's development. Since the *Homecoming* event of 2009 was criticised by anti-racist campaigners for its exclusive focus on Scotland's white diasporas, SNP politicians have more frequently acknowledged Scotland's imperial legacy. Section 4 builds on these observations through an assessment of Scottish Parliamentary discussions on slavery and abolition. The implications of nationalist acceptance of Scotland's historical status as an imperial core are assessed. This new understanding is understood to be the outcome of both the national context of academic historical reappraisal and the local and international context conditioned by the transatlantic BLM conversation.

2 | WORLD ECONOMY SCHOOL AND 'DEVELOPMENT BY INVITATION'

Scottish nationalism has a long history of division over Scotland's role in the British empire, extending to the SNP's early years. Whilst leader of the SNP, Andrew Dewar Gibb authored the *Scottish Empire* (1937). Gibb argued that the British empire had propped up the Union, and, because it restricted the more profitable European trade, it prohibited Scottish growth (Gibb, 1937: 313; Devine, 2006: 164). Not all the party membership were persuaded. Finlay (1992) emphasised that most interwar nationalists saw an independent Scotland as remaining within the British empire, either in continued collaboration with England as an imperial core or through obtaining dominion status in parallel with the white-settler colonies. From the 1960s, decolonisation framed arguments for independence. The SNP rose to prominence following Winnie Ewing's shock victory at the 1967 Hamilton by-election, reaching their peak twentieth-century election performance in October 1974 when they won 11 MPs and polled 30% of the popular vote. Nielsen and Ward (2015) argue that the global context shaped support for independence. In the dominant SNP worldview, Scotland was departing an archaic imperial Union in favour of post-colonial nationhood. This tilt in nationalist argument was shaped by shifting public opinion in Scotland. Bryan S. Glass' research on debates over African decolonisation demonstrates that over the late 1950s and 1960s, a progressive coalition of academics and Church of Scotland ministers was far more successful in influencing public opinion than colonial revanchists who wished to continue British rule over the Central African Federation (Glass, 2014: 79–80). Nationalists were influenced by these

discussions, developing concomitant perspectives that centred Scots as victims of colonialism rather than perpetrators of it.

In his historical assessment of arguments for Scottish independence, Ben Jackson states that 'the ideological fission of the concept of "internal colonialism" was simply too great for it to be ignored by Scottish nationalists' (Jackson, 2020: 80). From the 1970s onwards, sociologists in what has become known as the World Economy school traced global flows of commerce, trade and developmental stages. 'Periphery' economies depended upon the 'core' for finished goods, technology and capital, exporting produce in return; thus, the development of the core perpetuated underdevelopment (Wallerstein, 1974, 1980a: 270–2). Immanuel Wallerstein subsequently examined Scotland's idiosyncratic developmental pathway. Like 'other peripheral zones', Scotland's economy was said to have been stagnant in the seventeenth century. Attempts at settler colonisation in the Americas, including at Darien on the isthmus of Panama in the 1690s failed. For Wallerstein, the Incorporating Union between Scotland and England in 1707 occurred because of 'core rivalry in the world-economy' (particularly England's conflicts with France and Spain). The Union secured England's northern border (Wallerstein, 1980a: 251–5). Scottish politicians voted their parliament out of existence to gain trading access to the English empire (Macinnes, 2007). Wallerstein later refined his perspective, concluding that Scottish political elites facilitated 'development by invitation'. After 1750, the Scottish Lowlands rose to 'semi-periphery' due to dependent-development (based on Atlantic trades) whilst other regions remained underdeveloped (Wallerstein, 1980b).

Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism* (1975) developed the Wallersteinian model in a Scottish context. The internal colonialism thesis claimed territorially uneven development of capitalism continued during and after industrialisation. England expropriated material benefits from the Celtic peripheries. Hechter presented the Union as a reluctant partnership, acknowledging that unlike Ireland and Wales, 'Scotland held on to some vestige of her national culture through these institutional survivals'. According to Hechter, a 'cultural division of labour' arose from these relationships of economic exploitation, confining Celtic nations to a subsidiary status and encouraging both elite and popular class orientations towards oppositional parties: either Liberal, Labour or nationalist (Hechter, 1975: 39, 67–8). As noted by McCrone (2017: 199), Hechter sometimes conflated the *Gàidhealtachd*—the Scottish Highlands and Islands—with Scotland overall (whilst Wallerstein viewed the Highlands as underdeveloped, and Lowlands partially developed). Iain Mackinnon has recently argued that the *Gàidhealtachd* was in fact a site of 'internal colonialism' in the early modern period, and even into the late modern period, 'promoters and managers of projects ... conceived of their work as internal or "domestic colonization"' (Mackinnon, 2017). Hechter's conflation of Scottish Highlands and Lowlands, therefore, had important implications.

In *The Rousing of the Scottish Working Class* (1979), Scottish Marxist and nationalist labour historian James D. Young invoked Hechter, referring to Scotland's status as an 'English cultural colony' and 'internal colonialism' (Young, 1979: 11). As Jackson emphasises, it is important to understand the presentist pressures, which ensured that internal colonialism enjoyed predominance among nationalists (Jackson 2020: 82). These became more pronounced as deindustrialisation intensified and unemployment grew. Both were widely held to be the responsibility of UK government policy. Those dynamics were given a heightened colonial subtext by the UK government's absorption of oil revenues generated in historically Scottish territorial waters within the North Sea (Harvie, 1994). Whether the internal colonialism thesis was historically accurate was much less important than whether it could explain the present-day. A 1978 North Sea oil-themed leaflet produced by the SNP posed the question of British control of revenues in comparative terms, emphasising how Scotland stood when counterpoised to independent Norway and post-colonial Arab states in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries: 'The Norwegians or the Arabs wouldn't stand for it! Why should we?'² In a statement from February of the same year, Gordon Wilson, the SNP's energy spokesman and MP for Dundee East, referred to Scotland in internal colonial terms as 'the depressed appendage of England'.³ Five years later, Wilson was leader of the SNP. In the midst of accelerating industrial closures and expanding petroleum revenues, he exclaimed in a general election leaflet to his Dundee constituents that 'Scotland is now the 5th largest oil producer in the world, but we must be the only country ever to find oil and to have become poorer'. Redolent of Hechter's model of the exploitation of peripheries by the core, Wilson argued Scotland had generated a £20 billion oil revenue 'subsidy' for the UK Treasury over the previous decade.⁴

Internal colonialism perspectives had a palpable influence on Scottish nationalists. During 1976, a group of SNP activists published a collection of essays, *The Radical Approach*. It included an article by Isobel Lindsay, a sociologist at the University of Strathclyde who was the party's Vice-Chair for Policy. Lindsay condemned the destruction of 'indigenous' culture and the Gaelic language in the Highlands but extended her analysis to Scotland as a whole, explaining: '[Scots] language or dialect was rejected as inferior and the centres of power and influence increasingly moved outwith the country'. Lindsay concluded that Scotland was suffering from 'the debilitating effect' of internal colonialism through its status as a 'periphery' subject to the cultural and political will of the English core (Lindsay, 1976: 23–4). These sentiments chimed with SNP policy and rhetoric during the debate over North Sea oil. For instance, the previous year the party had released a statement that referred to London as 'the imperial capital' before asserting that 'Scotland is a colonial province. It is, in fact, the only significant oil producing country in that position'.⁵

Not all nationalists shared these sentiments. In 1980, Tom Nairn wrote an appraisal of Scotland's development under the Union for *The Bulletin of Scottish Politics*. Nairn underlined the contemporary political significance of perspectives on Scottish history, explaining that it was the increasing electoral salience of Scottish nationalism and constitutional change which necessitated 'a new relationship between the country and its past'. In Nairn's view, grasping Scotland's place in the world system required a re-examination of popular accounts of Scottish history in which the central role played by 'the missing link of the Improving Scot' and the imperial underpinnings of eighteenth and nineteenth century industrialisation was finally acknowledged (Nairn, 1980: 136–9). As is developed below, these imperatives became more strongly pronounced during the twenty-first century as the demands for a reckoning with Scotland's history grew within a devolved parliament, compelling the governing SNP to respond.

One important exception to dominant SNP views on Scottish imperialism was Stephen Maxwell's article, 'Scotland's Commercial Empire', published in *Scotland, Multinationals and the Third World* (1982). Maxwell was the SNP's Press Officer between 1973 and 1978. He was a prominent voice on the left of the SNP and highly influenced by Nairn (Maxwell, 2013). It is therefore unsurprising that Maxwell rejected the view that Scotland was an English colony. He emphasised Scotland's role in British imperialism, notably through its mercantile and subsequent industrial development. Maxwell was more explicit than Nairn in emphasising that whilst it may have been a 'junior' partner in empire, 'Scotland was nevertheless a major beneficiary of the slave trade'. Furthermore, Maxwell underlined the crucial role that cotton—a slave-grown product—played in the Scottish industrial revolution, highlighting the leading sector behind economic takeoff after 1778 (Maxwell 1982: 13). Maxwell's observations anticipated the conclusions of Scottish historians and nationalist politicians by decades. Whereas the mid-twentieth century setting had been one of imagining an independent Scotland joining the postcolonial world order, towards the end of the century, both cultural and political forces (in local and international contexts), as well as historiography, shaped a more nuanced national past, which incorporated historic culpability in Atlantic slavery.

3 | ABSENCE OF ATLANTIC SLAVERY IN SCOTTISH HISTORIOGRAPHY

Given the international intellectual climate and historiographical orthodoxies of the late twentieth century, a major shift was required for Scots to be popularly accepted as profiteers from Atlantic slavery. Eric Williams' *Capitalism & Slavery* (1944) preceded the world-economy school by tracing a flow from periphery to the centre: He famously argued that Atlantic slavery was central to the timing and progress of Britain's Industrial Revolution, c.1760–1830 (Williams, 1944). Williams noted that the profits of the slave trade, Atlantic commerce, and private investments by merchants and planters underpinned British industrialisation. This ground-breaking work initiated a mature historiography relative to the significance of Atlantic slavery to English development, although these questions would be posed in Scottish historiography much later.

The importance of both the Atlantic trades and the profits of slavery was initially underestimated by historians of Scotland. From 1956 until the late 1970s, an influential group of historians, including T.C. Smout, downplayed the extent to which Atlantic commerce (and extension, chattel slavery) contributed to Scottish development. Historians

advancing 'enclave' arguments argued that trade in colonial produce (especially tobacco) was monopolised by a few Glasgow merchants and was an 'enclave' within a Scottish economy developing independently of colonial processes. Thus, the influential 'enclave' school claimed Atlantic commerce and merchant capital had few multiplier effects on the wider Scottish economy (Campbell, 1965; Mitchison, 1970; Smout, 1969). The enclave explanations, through its isolation of the colonial trade, chimed with Hechter's emphasis upon the geographical and economic limitations of Scotland's development.

T.M. Devine's work from 1971 onwards, by contrast, illustrated the broader significance of merchant capital and the Atlantic trades to Scottish agricultural and industrial development. It was to be, however, another 40 years before chattel slavery was accepted as the foundation that supported these revolutionary processes (Mullen, 2022b). Since the late 1990s, the scholarship around Scotland's connections with Atlantic slavery has been transformed. It is now largely accepted that relatively few 'triangular trade' voyages (just 27 are recorded) departed Scottish ports between 1706 and 1766 (Duffill, 2004). However, Scots were disproportionately involved in trading produce grown by enslaved people. In 1997, Christopher Whatley acknowledged the centrality of the West India cotton to the Scottish industrial revolution, and whilst noting the importance of slave societies as export markets, there was no acknowledgement of Atlantic slavery as the foundation of Scottish economic change (Whatley, 1997). In 1998 and 2005, respectively, Allan MacInnes and Douglas Hamilton established models of capital-in flow from the British West Indies to Scotland, with the latter invoking the Williams thesis (Hamilton, 2005; Macinnes, 1998).

In 2011, T.M. Devine followed by posing the question 'Did Slavery Make Scotia great?' (Devine, 2011), which suggested that chattel slavery accelerated Scottish economic development. Atlantic commerce and merchant capital, and by extension chattel slavery, were vitally important to the rapid development of the Scottish economy. The *Legacies of British Slave-ownership* project—which reported in the early 2010s—confirmed that Scots were disproportionately involved as Caribbean enslavers. With the publication of *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past* (2015), it is now generally accepted that after 1707, Atlantic (especially Caribbean) slavery and its commerce had a more significant effect on the economic development of Scotland than Ireland, England or Wales (Devine, 2015). This collection resonated powerfully beyond academic circles, indeed was Edinburgh University Press' bestselling text in 2015.

Whilst historians of Scotland were late to recognise the centrality of Atlantic slavery to the development of Scotland, this new orthodoxy represents the final refutation of Scotland as 'periphery'. Rather than an 'internal colony', Scotland's invitation to the core meant imperialism played a proportionately greater effect on national development compared with England, whose empire Scots infiltrated. In 40 years, the empirical evidence of Scots as colonisers has rendered the narrative of colonised Scotland obsolete in historiographical terms.

4 | NATIONALISM, SLAVERY AND EMPIRE

Since the establishment of a Scottish Parliament in 1999, Scottish nationalists have been increasingly confronted with irreconcilable historical truths. Scots played a disproportionate role across British slavery societies, and Atlantic commerce was decisive in nation-shaping. Some scholars argue that Scottish nationalism still has not reconciled with the new orthodoxies. In 2018, Minna Liinpää argued that the SNP and Scottish administrations had massaged historical realities by focusing 'on very specific strands of history at the expense of more uncomfortable episodes in Scotland's past'. One chapter section opened with Black History Month from 2001, commented on Homecoming 2014, but ended with a discussion of the infamous Slave Trade Booklet devised under the Unionist Labour-led Scottish Executive in 2007 (Liinpää, 2018: 15, 28–30). The reverse-chronological approach concluded 'more remains to be done', which was expected, because this chapter did not address the most recent public initiatives led by Scottish nationalists, which confronted Scotland's imperial past.

Historian David Alston is a leading critic of what he perceives to be a nationalist vision of Scotland and Atlantic slavery. As a local councillor for the pro-Union Liberal Democrat Party in the Highlands, he was quoted in the lead up to the referendum on Scottish independence in September 2014: 'in these ten years nothing has frightened me

as much as the prospect of a Yes vote' (MacAllister, 2014). Alston's historical work, notably *Slaves and Highlanders* (2021), referred to nationalists' 'selective reading' of history and claimed that slavery was absent from nationalist discourse. He further claims that nationalism 'seems bound to regard Scotland's involvement with slavery—and in colonialism—as lying outside that shared core of values which it is claimed constitute Scottishness'. Alston criticised the Scottish Government's *Homecoming* in 2009 (developed under Scottish Labour and delivered by the SNP), quoting Stephen Mullen's critique that the 2009 events presented a romanticised 'Disney-like' version of the nation's history (Alston, 2021: 306–7). This event encouraged rich, white North Americans to return as part of a long-lost Scottish diaspora (increasing tourist income in the process), although there was no mention of the former colonies in the Caribbean. The obvious inference from this political strategy in 2009 was that the African-Caribbean Campbells, Stewarts and Mackenzies were not part of the *Homecoming*'s 'Team Scotland'.

Yet, whilst Alston bases his claims on events before 2013, there has been an important shift how these issues have been addressed by leading SNP figures. This can be understood, in part, as the receptiveness of the Scottish Government to growing pressure from civil society organisations such as Glasgow Anti Racist Alliance (now Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights). During the second *Homecoming* (2014), the Scottish Government provided a platform to discuss Scotland's imperial history by sponsoring the conference 'The Global Migrations of the Scottish People since c.1600'. SNP Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs Fiona Hyslop's foreword acknowledged a 'great opportunity to bring together our learning from history'. SNP Minister for External Affairs and International Development, Humza Yousaf, opened a session with the panel 'Scotland and Black Slavery', at which David Alston presented on the role of Highland Scots as enslavers (Conference Programme, 2014). Thus, *Homecoming* 2014 provided a platform for critical discussion around the Scottish empire that was conspicuously absent 5 years earlier.

In *Slaves and Highlanders*, David Alston bolstered his claims of nationalism's 'selective reading' of history by critiquing Scotland's civic institutions and the government. Accurately noting absences around Atlantic slavery in the Museum of Scotland in 1998 until 2013, Alston argued this was emblematic of a nationwide failure (Alston, 2021: 7–8, 305–7). More recent moves towards recognition, however, were not acknowledged. These demonstrate how international contexts continue to shape nationalist appraisals of Scotland's past. On 10 June 2020, in the aftermath of global BLM protests and a heightened discussion on the history of racism and slavery in Scotland, the pro-independence Scottish Greens won majority backing in the Scottish Parliament for proposals to establish a museum of slavery. Three months later, the Scottish Government launched a national consultation via Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) to examine how 'existing and future museum collections can better recognise and represent a more accurate portrayal of Scotland's colonial and slavery history'. The SNP MSP and equalities minister, Christina McKelvie, was quoted:

It is important that we recognise Scotland's role in these painful parts of history, to ensure we learn from the mistakes and atrocities of the past and be certain they are never repeated. By listening to the views of people from ethnic minority backgrounds, working with MGS in collaboration with race equality stakeholders, we will better recognise and represent a more accurate portrayal of Scotland's colonial and slavery history

(Mills, 2020).

These initiatives suggest that Scottish nationalists in key positions have begun to evolve a stance, which accommodates Scotland's historical links to Atlantic slavery within a revived case for an independent, multicultural Scotland.

5 | SNP DISCOURSES OF ATLANTIC SLAVERY IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT (1999–2021)

In an authoritative study written during the early years of the Scottish Parliament, Michael Keating underlined that Scottish nationalism had lost its dominant 'nostalgic, defensive and somewhat parochial' qualities by the late

twentieth century. Keating emphasised that devolution was delivered by a broad societal coalition that the SNP only played a minor part in:

Contemporary nationalism is more diffuse spreading well beyond the limits of the SNP. It is more open, more European and progressive. It tends to the social democratic left, is more self-confident and less defensive. Self-government for Scotland, one seen as an anachronism or form of pathology in the British body politic, is now widely seen as a contribution to social modernization

(Keating, 2001: 245).

It was this context that drove reassessments of Scotland's history within civil society, and which specifically encouraged the SNP to increasingly acknowledge the role of Scots in Atlantic slavery.

Contributions in the Scottish Parliament provide insights on developing nationalist assessments of Atlantic slavery. As will be shown, this institution has featured intermittent discussions over British and Scottish connections with slavery and abolition since it was established, demonstrating the growing presence of the colonial past within contemporary Scottish politics. This section assesses SNP parliamentarians' reading of history, examining how Scotland's connections with Atlantic slavery and its abolitions have been invoked since its establishment. The BLM protests of 2020 provoked debate across the world, including within the Scottish Parliament. This section, therefore, tests responses in two key sections: (1) parliamentary contributions between 1999 and 2019, and (2) four motions addressing historic chattel slavery between January 2007 and November 2020. This sampling strategy facilitates comparative analysis of pre- and post-BLM parliamentary attitudes.

Labour was the dominant governing party within the devolved Scottish Parliament from 1999 to 2007 (as the Scottish Executive), and the SNP have been in power since May 2007 (when the Executive was renamed the Scottish Government) until present. In 1999, Scotland's historic connections with slavery remained absent from popular discourse. As outlined above, there has been considerable scholarly and public discussions since then. Since the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, there have been several relevant anniversaries and events that encouraged political introspection into the national past: the tricentennial of the union between Scotland and England (1707–2007), the bicentennial of the abolition of the slave trade act (1807–2007), the bicentennial of David Livingstone's birth (1813–2013) and the Scottish independence referendum (2014).

This section is based upon analysis of the official reports of the Scottish Parliament, identifying SNP Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) who, mainly between 1999 and 2019, discussed Great Britain's historic connections with the trafficking in people from Africa (historically known as the 'slave trade'), plantation slavery or their abolitions in 1807 and 1834, respectively. This approach—based upon sampling key words 'slavery' and 'abolition'—excluded all discussions of modern form of illegal, unfree labour (termed 'modern slavery') unless compared to British chattel slavery. Twenty-one relevant parliamentary events were identified between 6 December 1999 and January 2019. Four strands became apparent during the analysis: (1) English/British establishment and profiteering from Atlantic slavery, c.1600s–1838; (2) the distinctive Scottish role in Atlantic slavery, c.1707–1838; (3) Britain's role in the abolitions of the slave trade in 1807, and/or plantation slavery in 1834–1838; and (4) the role of Scots as abolitionists, and/or role of Scottish judiciary and legal profession in decreeing slavery illegal in Scotland, 1778. All four approaches were covered in SNP MSP Jamie Hepburn's contribution before the Scottish Parliament on 4 February 2009:

In Scotland, the UK, Europe and beyond, we rightly show contrition for our role in the slave trade of centuries past. It is rightly described as a stain on our collective history. Just as we show contrition, we commend the abolition of the slave trade and those who worked for its abolition, whether it be Robert Wedderburn in Scotland, William Wilberforce in the UK or Abraham Lincoln and his emancipation proclamation of 1863.

This was an unusually triangulating contribution, critiquing the role of Scots and residents of the United Kingdom in the trafficking of African people as a 'stain', as well as praising the role of British and Scottish abolitionism by invoking

TABLE 1 How Scottish Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) invoked histories of slavery and abolition in Scottish Parliament (1999–2019)

		1. British/ slavery	2. Scotland/ slavery	3. British/ abolition	4. Scottish/ abolition	Total
Independent	Praise					0
	Critical		2			2
Scottish Labour	Praise			2	5	7
	Critical		1			1
Scottish National Party	Praise			3	18	21
	Critical	3	7	1		11
Scottish Liberal Democrat	Praise			1	1	2
	Critical					0
Scottish Conservative & Unionist	Praise			5	2	7
	Critical	1				1
Scottish Green	Praise			1		1
	Critical		1			1
Totals		4	11	13	26	54

Source: 'Search the Official Report' provides data on all Parliamentary Business (Parliamentary Debates, Oral Questions, First Minister's Questions and Committee Meetings). Available at: <https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/13595.aspx?mode=a>.

an English abolitionist, William Wilberforce, and Robert Wedderburn, the son of a Scottish planter in Jamaica who later became a famous abolitionist.

Analysis of 54 contributions at 21 events in the Scottish Parliament between 1999 and 2019 provides insights into party positions on the historic British role in slavery or abolition (for sampling, see Table 1). As Table 1 shows, in terms of addressing the English/British role in Atlantic slavery and profiteering up to 1838 (strand 1), as expected, no parliamentarians praised national involvement. SNP parliamentarians were the most critical. The first critical acknowledgement of Britain's historic role in slavery was made when the Scottish Parliament was almost 10 years old. At a meeting on 28 May 2008, Bill Wilson (SNP) noted in a debate over climate change that 'we all agree that the slave trade was wrong—I hope'. Others were more overly critical of British involvement. Responding to the leader of the Conservatives, Annabel Goldie, Willie Coffey (SNP) noted on 27 November 2012 that the British empire ended the slave trade in 1807, but 'hung on to the profits from it [plantation slavery] for another 29 years, before it was abolished' (although Coffey's chronology was inaccurate, since plantation slavery was abolished in 1834—27 years later). SNP MSPs also criticised Scottish role in Atlantic slavery, making seven comments between 2008 and 2019. Most of this criticism came in 2011 and after. However, as will be explained below, nationalists also adopted a historical balancing act, often qualifying acknowledgment of the role of Scots as perpetrator by insisting on simultaneously presented narratives of victimhood.

Two important events occurred during earlier sessions of the parliament: the bicentennial of the slave trade act in March 2007 (during session May 2003–April 2007) and preparation for the first *Homecoming* in 2009 (during session May 2007–March 2011). There was no major parliamentary commentary around the abolition of the slave trade bicentennial in 2007 (because Labour MSP John Home Robertson's motion attracted no support, see below). The clearest condemnation of the Scottish role in Atlantic slavery in the Scottish Parliament between 1999 and 2019 was delivered by an outsider, demonstrating the crucial role of civil society pressure in bringing the legacies of slavery onto the Scottish political agenda. On 7 February 2007, the Right Rev. Alan McDonald, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, delivered Holyrood's weekly *Time for Reflection*. In his contribution, McDonald acknowledged the Company of Scotland's establishment of a slave trading enterprise in 1695, as well as

the role of Scots in the West Indies and the effects on Scottish economic development, especially the rise of Glasgow. McDonald also emphasised the role of Scottish abolitionists in the movement for the abolition of the slave trade, presumably informed by the work of Rev. Dr. Iain Whyte, a Church of Scotland Minister and historian whose text had been published the previous year (Whyte, 2006).

The first *Homecoming* 2009 attracted more interest. The late Margo MacDonald, formerly Deputy Leader of the SNP and MSP whilst in the party (1999–2003) and Independent MSP (2003–2014), was the lone dissenting parliamentary voice about the *Homecoming*. On 29 October 2008, McDonald noted that Scotland's global connections 'includes many people with dark skin, who are the descendants of slaves in the southern United States and the West Indies. Those people are part of our diaspora, too'. In the aftermath of the critical response to the *Homecoming* (2009) discussed above, parliamentarians became much more critically aware, exemplified by Jean Urquhart's (Highlands and Islands, SNP) commentary on 29 September 2011:

Scotland's history is not something that we can always be proud of. Our role in the British empire, in slavery and in land acquisition in other countries are all part of it and need to be learned. We need to learn about our mistakes and although our past can be inglorious, that is no reason not to teach history.

Even as opponents of the Union, SNP MSPs also acknowledged the significance of British abolition, with Sandra White noting on 20 March 2008 that Great Britain 'ended slavery, and we were proud of that'. Scottish Unionists sometimes invoked the British Parliament's passage of abolition to support the continuation of the modern political status quo. In the Scottish Parliament on 27 November 2012, Conservative Annabel Goldie (leader of the party 2005 to 2011) endorsed the Union's supposed moral efficacy in abolishing slavery:

I believe that our greatest successes ... happened not by acting alone ... by acting together and looking outward as part of the remarkable union that is the United Kingdom. I remind Parliament that it was together, as part of that United Kingdom, that we led the fight against slavery.

This prompted an immediate rebuke from Margo MacDonald that day: 'we have nothing to be proud of in Scotland when it comes to the slave trade'. It was MacDonald (1976) who wrote the foreword to *The Radical Approach* discussed above, a collection of essays that included an internal colonial analysis. Her comments from Holyrood on 27 November 2012 underline that almost four decades later, leading and formerly leading nationalists had revised their historical understanding of Scotland's place in global history. Although independent when she made them, MacDonald's comments were indicative of a shift in mainstream nationalist thinking. Perhaps aware of the self-congratulatory tone of previous contributions, SNP MSP and Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs, Roseanna Cunningham, warned during a debate on 22 December 2011 that MSPs 'should all be careful about ... complacency about the notion of the abolition of slavery, on which we can be inclined to congratulate ourselves'.

Scotland's abolitionist credentials (strand 4) were by far the most popular contributions from all party's MSPs (26 of 54, 48%). Whilst SNP MSPs were less inclined to praise British abolitionism, they frequently invoked the *perceived* Scottish role in abolition—this type of commentary represented just over half of the SNP's parliamentarians' overall contributions between 1999 and 2019. Most of the SNP's praise for Scottish abolitionism (14 of 18 contributions) centred on the activities of the missionary David Livingstone. Appraising Livingstone through a nationalist lens on 7 November 2012, Bruce Crawford (SNP MSP, Stirling) described him as 'one of Scotland's national heroes'.

A variation in the SNP parliamentarian praise of the Scottish role in abolition relates to the Joseph Knight case of 1778. This was invoked by two SNP MSPs, Mike Russell and Clare Adamson. Russell's contribution on 29 September 2011 came during a debate about a proposed Scottish Studies curriculum and was made in response to Jenny Marra, a Labour MSP, who queried if the curriculum would be taught impartially. In response, Russell, then Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, agreed that the role of Scottish enslavers needed to be taught but balanced that

by claiming that the story of Joseph Knight should also, as he had been given a 'commitment of Scottish law—that the state of slavery is not recognized by the laws of this Scottish kingdom'. Knight was enslaved in Jamaica but travelled with his enslaver to Scotland in the early 1770s. He escaped and was ultimately freed by the Court of Session. As legal scholar John Cairns noted, 'Scotland was not a slave society, but until 1778 it was a society with slaves' (Cairns, 2013). Two Black individuals attempted to gain freedom in Scottish courts before Joseph Knight. One enslaved runaway, Jamie Montgomery, was re-captured by John Braidwood, an officer of the Baillie of the Court of Edinburgh, in 1756. Braidwood received a reward whilst Jamie was put in jail by order of the Magistrates in advance of a court hearing.⁶ With the final hearing set for January 1757, Jamie Montgomery died in Edinburgh's Tolbooth before it came before the court. Thus, whilst SNP MSP Mike Russell (accurately) acknowledged the role of Scots legislators in declaring slavery illegal in Scotland in 1778, his account disregarded the legal profession's more substantial role in upholding what amounted to slavery without a legal code for most of the eighteenth century.

SNP parliamentarians have made other high-profile calls to maintain a conjoined narrative of colonised and coloniser rather than enslaver and abolitionist. By advocating the simultaneous representation of Scots as both perpetrating and suffering from colonialism, some nationalist politicians advance what David Alston has described as 'competitive victimhood' (Alston, 2021: 315). In a meeting of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee on 24 January 2019, SNP MSP Kenneth Gibson queried the purpose and cost of Historic Environment Scotland's proposed research study on Scotland's built heritage and Atlantic slavery. Green MSP Ross Greer noted it was to improve the 'level of awareness', and Gibson retorted 'the same could be said about the people who were cleared from the Highlands ... we need to look at Scotland's history in the round'. Gibson was apparently unaware the Highland Clearances are already memorialised across multiple Scottish museums, notably at Strathnaver in Sutherland (Gouriévidis, 2013). It appears this call was primarily driven to ensure narratives that depicted Scots as enslavers were balanced by others that portray Scots in a sympathetic light.

Stuart McMillan (SNP MSP, Greenock and Inverclyde) responded to a motion on 16 September 2020, which called for a 'national museum to highlight Scotland's role in the slave trade and colonialism' by referencing 'other parts of Scotland's negative history'. McMillan called for the 'stories of the Highland clearances and of the 1820 Martyrs' to be incorporated in any eventual museum. His reference to the 1820 martyrs—three weavers executed following a large strike and failed uprising—as well as Kenny MacAskill's reference to Scottish colliers at the outset underlines that both Highland and working-class experiences of oppression are now invoked in efforts to balance Scotland's colonial past. In light of the Scottish Government sponsored consultation 'Empire, Slavery & Scotland's Museums' (2022), which is billed as the first step to a new national museum, these types of historical balancing acts have future policy implications. Aspects of the 'internal colonialism' thesis remain embedded within the SNP, and some of its parliamentary representatives may yet decide the strategic focus of any proposed museum. Competing understandings of Scotland past will establish an overall theme, which will effectively define approaches to curatorial and collecting policies.

Since 2014, Scotland's connections with New World slavery have also been more fully recognised by SNP parliamentarians at both Westminster and Holyrood in more unambiguous terms. In July 2015, during Anne McLaughlin's maiden speech (SNP MP for Glasgow North-East, 2015–2017, and 2019–present), she supported calls for reparations: 'I will support calls for reparations for those countries that suffered most from our involvement in the slave trade - namely, the Caribbean countries' (Hansard, 2015a). On 21 October 2015, McLaughlin called for an apology from 'not just the British Government, but the Government in Scotland' (Hansard, 2015b). Rank-and-file SNP members have advocated similar policies. In July 2019, the Glasgow Provan Constituency Branch called for the Scottish Government to make 'a formal national apology for Scotland's role in the perpetuation of slavery and colonialism' (Learmonth, 2019). These views are irreconcilable with the internal colonialism stance, and it remains to be seen what shall prevail in future debates.

Two qualifiers suggest that the 'internal colonialism' thesis is not buried yet. First, colonialism can exist without chattel slavery as the dominant mode of forced labour. And, second, as the Scottish Government's claim to have a mandate to hold a referendum through a Scottish Parliamentary majority is ignored by the UK Government, the nature of the Union is arguably shifting away from being a voluntary relationship. Indeed, psephologist Iain McLean

TABLE 2 Support for motions by political party membership, as percent of overall Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs)

Political party motion	Labour	SNP	Liberal Democrat	Conservative	Green
Jan-07	1.79%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Oct-15	0%	18.90%	0%	0%	0%
Apr-17	0%	15.87%	0%	3.23%	33.33%
Jun-20	45.83%	57.14%	40%	0%	50%

Abbreviation: SNP, Scottish National Party.

Source: Scottish Parliament: votes and motions search, available at <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/votes-and-motions-search>.

recently described successive British prime ministers as pursuing a 'muscular unionist' approach, which is tantamount to 'imperialism' (McLean, 2022). Despite the historical demerits of the 'Scotland as a colony' thesis, this political dynamic may stimulate a polemical case for internal colonialism without slavery. Few SNP representatives publicly express such views, but one pro-independence academic, Richard Murphy, was criticised in January 2022 for publicly maintaining that Scotland was a colony (Dickie, 2022).

Increasing nationalist recognition of the historic Scottish role in Atlantic slavery is further evidenced by comparing support for Parliamentary motions (see Table 2). Between 2007 and 2020, four motions that refer to Scotland's historic connections with chattel slavery were submitted to the Scottish Parliament. The first of these was by Labour MSP John Home Robertson calling for recognition of Scots involvement in the slave trade (which, as noted above, attracted no support). A second motion introduced by SNP MSP John Mason in October 2015 marked the publication of *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past*. Just as *The Scottish Nation* moulded attitudes towards Scottish history during the early devolution years, a later work of academic history shifted politicians' views. A third motion, introduced by John Mason in April 2017, called for a slavery museum in Glasgow. By far the most popular of the four motions was submitted by pro-independence Green MSP Patrick Harvie on 9 June 2020, which called for 'solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement' along with a slavery museum.⁷ The SNP has been the most active party in supporting resolutions with high levels of activity from the Greens, a smaller parliamentary group (who have shared power with the SNP in the Scottish Parliament since 2021). This has become official policy. The SNP and Scottish Greens manifestos in 2021 both referred to issues around addressing Scotland's colonial past (Scottish Greens Manifesto, 2021; SNP Manifesto, 2021).

Comparing national approaches to public statuary and commemorative practices at Scottish and UK levels further highlights the similarities and differences between Westminster and Holyrood. In November 2020, the Common-Sense group of Conservatives in Westminster (59 MPs and seven peers) wrote an open letter stating 'History must neither be sanitised nor rewritten to suit "snowflake" preoccupations. A clique of powerful, privileged liberals must not be allowed to rewrite our history' (Britain's heroes, 2020). This has been matched by calls to defund institutions such as the National Trust, which committed to examine the colonial connections of its properties (Hunt, 2020). On 22 September 2020, Oliver Dowden, the Conservative Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, wrote a letter to museums, stating public bodies should 'contextualize or reinterpret them [statues] in a way that enables the public to learn about them in their entirety' rather than remove them (Rea, 2020). This led to new legal protection for English heritage, announced in January 2021 and described as the 'retain and explain' policy, which was written in response to the removal of statues, such as Edward Colston in Bristol (Dowden & Jenrick, 2021). In Scotland, there is no equivalent to the Common-Sense group although the approach to public statuary and commemorative practices is remarkably similar. In June 2020, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon noted 'We shouldn't have statues of people who've profited from the slave trade without at the very least a way of making the public know who these people were and what their business was' (Kaidan, 2020).

The Scottish National Party encourages scholarly introspection into the nation's historic connections with Atlantic slavery in a way that is unusual in British politics. At least three local councils under SNP-led administrations launched

studies into historic connections with slavery: Glasgow (November 2019), Renfrewshire (June 2020) and Edinburgh (November 2020). At the time of the launch of the Glasgow study, SNP leader of the council Susan Aitken was quoted: 'I believe that as a city we now have to know the reach of that slave-economy wealth. We need to know how to properly address our past, and we need to know to allow Glasgow to move forward from its past' (Leadbetter, 2019). After what has become known as the 'Glasgow Slavery Audit' reported its findings (Mullen, 2022a), Aitken offered an apology on behalf of Glasgow Council for the city's historic role in slavery.

Thus, there has been a major shift from the view of Scotland as 'colonised' by England that predominated within the SNP during 1980s to an apology for Glasgow's involvement with slavery in the 2020s (the first of its type from a Scottish local authority). This change is not as improbable as it might seem. The intellectual foundation that supported the view of Scotland as an 'internal colony' has been superseded by historical research tracing the broad contours of Scottish involvement in Atlantic slavery. SNP criticism of historic involvement with the British empire also serves as a means of publicly distancing Scotland from revanchist attitudes towards the imperial past that have become increasingly dominant within the Conservative Party. Indeed, one recent article summarised young SNP members' understandings of Scotland and the UK, and several declared 'they were ashamed of what the British empire had done' (Breniaux, 2021).

Biggar and Stokes' report—on what they term 'progressive' anti-imperialism—argues from an oppositional perspective that Scottish nationalists are using narratives founded on the view of 'colonized non-Western victim versus colonial Western oppressor' and acceptance of Britain's imperial historical responsibilities to encourage 'Scotland's possible independence as part of the progressive arc of history'. Whilst these comments are themselves made by advocates of a combative 'positive story about Britain', they are perceptive in understanding the role that 'the politics of the present' plays in shaping these discussions (Biggar & Stokes, 2021). In the eyes of their opponents, the SNP is responding to BLM by embracing critical perspectives on Scotland's imperial history. This contrasts with British establishment reactions, which are increasingly characterised by resistance to informed historical criticisms of imperialism. Addressing Scotland's history in Atlantic slavery provides a natural counterpoint and provides public validation to valorise the progressive character of the independence movement.

The SNP leadership has embraced the postcolonial *zeitgeist* in Scottish society, supported by new historiographical orthodoxies and encouraged by anti-racist activism. Indeed, a model of international development proposed for an independent Scotland has factored in a mechanism to memorialise Scotland's historic involvement in the British empire. In July 2022, *The Times* reported on a policy paper by Chris Law, the SNP's international development spokesman, that suggested an independent Scottish Government would address 'all Scotland's colonial crimes by removing/adding plaques that acknowledge the harm ... [of] that era in Scotland'. And official apologies would be issued to affected communities (Andrews, 2022). Recognition of Scotland's colonial past is necessary to fulfil the SNP's contemporary presentation of independence as open-minded, pluralistic and outward looking, in opposition to Brexit and increasingly exclusive and racialized forms of national identity. Even so, T.M. Devine has branded proposed apologies from the Scottish Government for colonial slavery as 'mere tokenism' (Glover, 2022). Beyond such efforts, there is more reluctance to consider the ongoing impact of analysing Scotland's present position in the world system, as well as the impact on those suffering from the long-term effects colonisation and uneven development. Whilst the BLM-influenced discussion has focused on acknowledging Scotland's slavery past, and ongoing racial inequalities within the country, it has not yet sparked a more developed consideration of Scotland's continued status as a wealthy, core nation or ongoing questions of injustice in the global economy.

6 | CONCLUSION

Dominant nationalist perspectives on Scotland's historical position with regards to colonialism have evolved remarkably over the last half century. Where once it was widely argued that Scotland was itself an internal colony, there is now growing acceptance that the nation was an imperial core more disproportionately shaped by Atlantic slavery

than other parts of Britain. This reappraisal developed under the impetus of dominant global intellectual trends as well as more localised changes within Scottish society and political strategies pursued by the SNP. This article demonstrates that early analyses influenced by world-systems theory viewed Scotland as 'periphery' (or at least semi-periphery). Hechter's *Internal Colonialism* more fully theorised this position, explaining that Scottish industrialisation was confined to a Central Belt enclave and left the nation lagging behind the English core, which profited from its Celtic peripheries and exercised cultural domination over them. SNP perspectives from the 1970s and 1980s chimed with these assessments, positioning Scotland as an exploited appendage of England. Scottish nationalist intellectuals drew on the experience of the Highlands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but generalised them to Scotland as a whole. There was a strong emotive appeal to these arguments during a period when nationalists were galvanised by what they understood to be the UK government's misappropriation of North Sea oil revenues at a time when newly independent post-colonial nations were seen to enjoy the benefits of economic sovereignty.

Alternative assessments of Scotland's development were put forward during the same time-period by prominent nationalist theorists, including Tom Nairn, who emphasised that Scotland was a major beneficiary of British imperialism. Nairn's outlook was catalysed when Immanuel Wallerstein refined his view to that of understanding the Union as a form of 'development by invitation' rather than confining Scotland to periphery.

It is only in the twenty-first century under devolution that a significant public reassessment of Scotland's colonial past and its connections with slavery has begun to take place. Long-term efforts by figures in Scottish civil society and anti-racist activists—alongside the more forthright conclusions of academic historians regarding the relationship with transatlantic slavery and the modern Scottish economy—have forced these issues onto the agenda since 2007 (when the SNP formed a Scottish Government for the first time). An important change took place following criticisms of the 2009 *Homecoming* event by anti-racist campaigners and critical parliamentarians, including the independent former SNP MSP Margo MacDonald, who highlighted its exclusive focus on Scotland's white diaspora. Just as the adoption of the internal colonialism approach was a product of international trends, so too the influence of increasing awareness of slavery in British and transatlantic discussions around the history of racism have been a part of the SNP's re-evaluation of Scottish colonialism. These became particularly marked in the context of the BLM protests during the summer of 2020, which spurred tentative commitments towards more public commemorations of Scotland's imperial history.

Within the SNP, there evidently remain reservations about fully accepting the implications of Scotland's development through Atlantic slavery. Parliamentarians have rhetorically isolated the beneficiaries of slavery—the economic and political elite—from 'ordinary' Scots, be they the Scottish colliers, or textile workers who suffered the brutalities of industrialisation and political repression, or the Highlanders who were victims of clearance and Britain's uneven economic development. This effectively reprises an old tactic in reverse—whereas the Highlands once served to exemplify Scotland's experience of internal colonial economic development at large, the region now acts as a binary to the national role of coloniser. Perhaps even more fundamentally, and with major implications for other nations wrestling with their imperial histories, whilst the recent re-evaluation of chattel slavery has formed part of a broader discussion on race in Scottish society, it has been less formative to discussions on the national role in the perpetuation of global inequalities within the contemporary world system.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ In 1990, the then leader of the SNP, Gordon Wilson, referred to Scotland as 'England's last colony'. See Gordon Wilson, 'Three Decades of Service to Scotland's Independence Movement', *Scots Independent*, October 1990, p. 7, Scottish Political Archive, University of Stirling (hereafter SPA), *Scots Independent* February 1990–January 1992.
- ² 'Scotland's Oil: London's Rip Off' leaflet (1978), National Library of Scotland special collections (hereafter NLS), SNP (hereafter 10754)/27.
- ³ Statement, 6 February 1978, NLS, 10754/27.
- ⁴ Gordon Wilson Election Communication (1983) SPA/Gordon Wilson/Election Material/1.
- ⁵ Statement 4, 7 April 1975, NLS, 10754/26.
- ⁶ 'Reward to John Braidwood', 13 May 1756, National Records of Scotland, CS234/5/3/12.
- ⁷ Scottish Parliament Motions ref. S2M-05418: 'Bicentenary of the Abolition of Slave Trade', 16 January 2007; Motion ref. S5M-05112: 'People Made Glasgow', 10 April 2017; Motion ref. S4M-14490: 'Scotland's Slave Trade', 8 October 2015; Motion ref. S5M-22004.2: 'Showing Solidarity with Anti-Racism – Amendment', 9 June 2020.

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