

PRINCIPLE, PATRONAGE, PRAGMATISM: THE EARLS OF SUTHERLAND AND THE SPECTRUM OF LOYALISM DURING THE JACOBITE ERA

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Successive British ministries drew on a range of formal and informal methods as they sought to consolidate the Whig regime in Scotland in the decades following the union. In doing so, they were reliant on local elites who subscribed to common Whig ideals that aimed to protect the revolution, the union and the Protestant succession and who, therefore, opposed Jacobitism. This article builds on studies that have investigated the motivations of Scots who aligned themselves with the Whig cause during the Jacobite era through a case study of the earls of Sutherland and their engagement with political management and military service. It argues that, despite both principle and pragmatism pushing the earls towards loyalism, they were not simply yes-men for the ministry, seeking further opportunities and, occasionally, demonstrating disagreement with ministerial policies or alignment with oppositional factions. Moreover, given the contested status of Highlanders within the emerging British state, their experiences highlight the complexity of Scottish political culture and the important role Highland Whigs played in defeating Jacobitism.

THE revolution of 1688–90 sparked the creation of a Jacobite movement in Scotland as supporters of the exiled monarch organised in opposition to the new regime. As Allan Macinnes established, Jacobitism also spurred a counter movement, anti-Jacobitism, and the struggle between the two ideologies had significant dynastic, religious, national and opportunistic dimensions.¹

1. Allan I. Macinnes, 'Jacobitism in Scotland: Episodic Cause or National Movement?', *Scottish Historical Review*, 86 (2007), 225–52, <https://doi.org/10.3366/shr.2007.86.2.225>.

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The 1707 Anglo-Scottish Union increased Jacobite sentiment in Scotland through the strengthening of its national dimension. However, it also created the British state, which laid the basis for the management of Scottish society and, particularly after the 1714 Hanoverian Succession, the strengthening of the Whig regime.² The consolidation of the British state in the first half of the eighteenth century significantly contributed to the defeat of Jacobitism by the 1760s. John Brewer outlined how Britain became a centralised fiscal-military state, able to effectively fund war-making and imperial expansion through advances in government borrowing and taxation. Brewer argued this was a result of the revolution, which limited the power of the monarch and, over time, created a culture of cooperation between the Crown, parliament, the Church and local government, which resulted in a strong and stable state.³ Jacobitism posed a significant threat to this, causing successive ministries to attempt to instil a culture of Whiggism in Scotland and to undertake careful management of patronage and political affairs. As Linda Colley's work on the formation of British national identity highlighted, many elites played an active role in this process, recognising the opportunities the state provided and developing a shared sense of Britishness through their common Protestantism and experiences of war and empire building.⁴

The process of state formation also provided Scottish elites with opportunities to shape the emerging polity. Yet the wide range of connections, influences and negotiations that underpinned the fiscal-military state, enabling it to function, also indicate its limitations.⁵ Margaret Sankey, Daniel Szechi, Amy Watson and Matthew Dziennik have all shown the extent to which Scottish

2. Christopher A. Whatley, *The Scots and the Union: Then and Now* (Edinburgh, 2014), 217–29, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748680283>; Murray Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans: The Jacobite Army in 1745* (Edinburgh, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748627561.001.0001>; Daniel Szechi, *The Jacobites: Britain and Europe, 1688–1788*, second edition (Manchester, 2019).

3. John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State 1688–1783* (London, 1989); Christopher Storrs, 'The Fiscal-Military State in the "Long" Eighteenth Century', in Christopher Storrs (ed.), *The Fiscal Military State in Eighteenth Century Europe: Essays in Honour of P. G. M. Dickson* (Surrey, 2009), 1–22; Regarding the culture of cooperation, see Anthony Page, *Britain and the Seventy Years War, 1744–1815: Enlightenment, Revolution and Empire* (London, 2015), 63, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-47443-8>; Patrick K. O'Brien, 'Inseparable Connections: Trade, Economy, Fiscal State, and the Expansion of Empire, 1688–1815', in P. J. Marshall (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. II: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998), 53–77, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198205630.003.0003>.

4. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1992), 3–5 and passim; idem, 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument', *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (1992), 309–29, <https://doi.org/10.1086/386013>.

5. Matthew P. Dziennik, 'The Fiscal-Military State and Labour in the British Atlantic World' in Aaron Graham and Patrick Walsh (eds), *The British Fiscal-Military States, 1660–c.1783* (London, 2016), 159–78; Andrew Mackillop, 'Subsidy State or Drawback Province? Eighteenth-century Scotland and the British Fiscal-Military Complex' in Graham and Walsh (eds), *British Fiscal Military States, 179–200*; Andrew Mackillop, *Human Capital and Empire: Scotland, Ireland, Wales and British Imperialism in Asia, c.1690–c.1820* (Manchester, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526155337>;

elites were both willing and able to resist government measures or mould them to better fit their personal objectives.⁶ The Whig regime was not all-encompassing, relying on local elites to implement its policies. This meant individuals and factions could demonstrate opposition at Whitehall or neutrality during armed conflict without abandoning core Whig principles. The situation was more complex for Highlanders due to the persistent, though inaccurate, conflation of the region with Jacobitism.⁷ The developing 'Britishness' of the period was not inclusive, and Highlanders were often viewed as 'other' due to differences in language, culture and societal structure.⁸ This encouraged the state's binary conceptualisation of loyal versus disloyal, which, in turn, raised suspicion of Highland elites at times of Jacobite intrigue.

The core principle underpinning Whiggism was a commitment to securing the revolution, union and Protestant succession. It was, then, inherently anti-Jacobite. While a binary consideration of Jacobitism and anti-Jacobitism aligns with the state's contemporary understanding of loyal versus disloyal, it does not sufficiently capture the lived experiences of many eighteenth-century Scots, including Highlanders, who operated on a spectrum of Whig loyalism. Christopher Whatley argued that the 'Whig interest' in Scotland was driven primarily by religion, with Presbyterians overwhelmingly more likely to support the revolution and oppose the Jacobites.⁹ Those most committed to the ideal of limited monarchy celebrated the arrival of William of Orange (later William II of Scotland) as a 'liberator from religious and civil oppression', direct opposites of the 'hard-core, ideologically committed Jacobites' identified by Szechi.¹⁰ Typified by William Carstares and the 'cadre of émigré Scots' who were vital

Matthew P. Dziennik, "'Under ye Lash of ye Law": The State and the Law in the Post-Culloden Scottish Highlands', *Journal of British Studies*, 44 (2021), 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2021.58>.

6. Margaret Sankey and Daniel Szechi, 'Elite Culture and the Decline of Scottish Jacobitism 1716–1745', *Past & Present*, 173 (2001), 90–128, <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/173.1.90>; Amy Watson, 'Patriotism and Partisanship in Post-Union Scotland, 1724–37', *Scottish Historical Review*, 97 (2018), 57–84, <https://doi.org/10.3366/shr.2018.0353>; Dziennik, "'Under ye Lash'", 1–23.

7. Regarding the inaccurate conflation of the Highlands with Jacobitism see, Alastair Noble, "'That Barbarous and Mountainous Country": The Highlands and Government 1745–60', (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2021); Dziennik, "'Under ye Lash'"; idem, 'Liberty, Property and the Post-Culloden Acts in the Gàidhealtachd' in Gordon Pentland and Michael T. Davis (eds), *Liberty, Property and Popular Politics: England and Scotland, 1688–1815: Essays in Honour of H. T. Dickinson* (Edinburgh 2016), 58–72, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781474405683-008>.

8. See Geoffrey Plank, *Rebellion and Savagery: The Jacobite Rising of 1745 and the British Empire* (Philadelphia, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812207118>; Nicola Martin, *The British Army in Scotland and North America: Militarisation on the Fringes of the Empire* (London, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-89258-5_3.

9. Christopher A. Whatley, 'Reformed Religion, Regime Change, Scottish Whigs and the Struggle for the "Soul" of Scotland, c.1688–c.1788', *Scottish Historical Review*, 92 (2013), 68, 70, <https://doi.org/10.3366/shr.2013.0138>.

10. Ibid., 81; Szechi, *Jacobites*, 24.

in securing the revolution and later the union, this group represents one pole of Scottish Whiggism.¹¹ The other end of this pole is best exemplified by Simon Fraser, 11th Lord Lovat, who switched allegiance between the Whig regime and the Jacobites depending on which offered him the best opportunity for financial gain and status.¹² Again, this mirrors Szechi's identification of a second layer of Jacobites, the politically embittered, and there was indeed significant crossover between the two.¹³

Between these two poles, however, Scots drew on a range of factors when deciding whether, and how far, to support the Whig regime. In explaining Scottish political allegiances, early studies focused on financial motivation, opportunities for patronage and the importance of influential families like the Campbells of Argyll.¹⁴ Building on these ideas, Dziennik demonstrated the ways Highlanders, both elites and ordinary men, drew on understandings of pragmatic loyalty during the failed 1745–6 rising, weighing the benefits they could derive through military service alongside their ideological position.¹⁵ Dziennik's work highlighted the role local contexts played in guiding decision-making. Also focused on Highlanders, Macinnes examined the deepening tension between clan elites who were pursuing commercialisation and ordinary clansmen who were affected by the challenges it introduced, which caused some of those from traditionally Presbyterian Whig clans to turn to Jacobitism to protest societal change.¹⁶ Individuals considered how to act in relation to specific circumstances, and their responses were fluid. As such, investigating actions through this spectrum of Whig loyalism, rather than a binary of Jacobitism/anti-Jacobitism, provides a more nuanced understanding of Highland engagement with the British state during the Jacobite era.

Through a case study of one important family, the earls of Sutherland, this article will examine how Highland elites sought to contribute to, and benefit from, the fledgling British state as Whig loyalists. The Sutherlands were one

11. Whatley, 'Reformed Religion', 86–90, quotation at 87.

12. Memorial of Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat, undated, National Records of Scotland (hereafter NRS), Buccleuch Papers, GD224/918/15; Rosalind Mitchison, 'The Government and the Highlands, 1707–1745' in N. T. Phillipson and R. Mitchison (eds), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement: Essays in Scottish History in the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1970); Sarah Fraser, *The Last Highlander: Scotland's Most Notorious Clan Chief, Rebel and Double Agent* (London, 2012).

13. Szechi, *Jacobites*, 29–32.

14. Patrick W. J. Riley, *The English Ministers and Scotland, 1707–1727* (London, 1964); Alexander Murdoch, *The People Above: Politics and Administration in Mid-Eighteenth Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1980); John Stuart Shaw, *The Political History of Eighteenth Century Scotland* (New York, NY, 1999).

15. Matthew P. Dziennik, "'Armailt làidir de mhìlidsidh": Hanoverian Gaels and the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745', *Scottish Historical Review*, 100 (2021), 171–98, <https://doi.org/10.3366/shr.2021.0514>.

16. Allan I. Macinnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart, 1603–1788* (Edinburgh, 1996), 166–71.

of five clans Macinnes identified as being wholly Presbyterian and supporting William of Orange during the revolution and the government during both major Jacobite risings.¹⁷ John Gordon, Lord Strathnaver and, from 1703, 16th earl of Sutherland, quickly declared loyalty to William in 1688 and both he and his son, William Gordon, raised men for the Crown during the failed Jacobite attempts in 1715–16 and 1719. John's grandson, William Sutherland, 17th earl of Sutherland, followed family tradition in 1745–6.¹⁸ Both earls held parliamentary roles during their lifetime and were active participants in the fiscal-military state. But they were also performative in their loyalism and used it strategically to seek place and patronage. This study will examine their experiences of both the attempted political and military management of Scotland after the union. It will argue that, while these men were driven by a strong sense of principle closely linked to their religious identity, they were typical of Highland elites in drawing on a range of contexts when making decisions regarding their engagement with the Whig regime. The Sutherlands demonstrate the intertwined nature of genuine and performative Whig principles in Scottish political culture during the Jacobite era and reveal the importance of the latter for Highland elites, whose opportunities to shape the state were limited by their contested status.

I.

John Gordon proved a staunch revolutionary, raising a regiment in support of William and encouraging his brother-in-law, Jacobite commander John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, to surrender.¹⁹ Despite his quick actions, Gordon's loyalty was questioned due to his support for James during Argyll's rebellion in 1685 and his bond of friendship with the Catholic George Gordon, 1st duke of Gordon.²⁰ This would become a pattern of the Sutherlands' military engagement, showing that the interconnected nature of Scotland's elite society was viewed with suspicion. John's exertions were ultimately rewarded, however, when he was released from his bond of friendship—and an associated requirement to use the Gordon surname—and appointed a privy councillor. After succeeding to the earldom in 1703, John Sutherland took his seat in Scotland's parliament and was appointed as one of the commissioners for the

17. *Ibid.*, 247–9.

18. In numbering the earls, I follow the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, which leaves a gap between the ninth and eleventh earls.

19. 'John Gordon to Viscount Dundee, 3rd July 1689' in William Fraser, *The Sutherland Book* (3 vols, Edinburgh, 1892), II, 42.

20. Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, I, 319–20. George Gordon attempted to retain Edinburgh Castle for James during the revolution.

union negotiations in 1706. He therefore played an important role in the formation of the revolutionary regime and the creation of the British state; he was further rewarded for his efforts in 1707 when he was elected as one of the first Scottish peers to sit in the post-union House of Lords.²¹

The earl's election to the House of Lords ensured him an important role in the new British state. Scottish representation in the British parliament was through sixteen Scottish peers who sat in the House of Lords on a representative, rather than hereditary, basis, and forty-five Scottish members of parliament (MPs) who sat in the House of Commons on an elected basis. The peerage elections took place in Edinburgh ahead of each new parliament, or upon a seat becoming vacant; all of the Scottish nobility, about 145 men, were entitled to vote.²² The ministry published its list of preferred candidates ahead of each election and used political managers to try and attain sufficient support for it. From 1710, an appearance on the court list proved almost a guarantee of election, which increased competition among the Scottish nobles to secure this marker of status.²³ The peerage elections were particularly important, as an order of 1711 prevented any Scots who were created in the British peerage from taking their seat in the upper house except as one of the sixteen Scottish representatives.²⁴ Successive ministries were therefore able to exert significant control over Scottish peerage elections with their aim being to ensure Scottish politicians at Whitehall would align themselves with the ministry.²⁵

Yet the existence of rival Scottish Whig factions, in the form of the Argathelians and the Squadrone, provided a vehicle through which individuals could demonstrate opposition while remaining aligned with Whig principles. The Argathelians developed from the pre-union Court Party and were aligned to John Campbell, 2nd duke of Argyll, and his brother Archibald Campbell, earl of

21. Henry Paton, rev. by Jonathan Spain, 'Sutherland [formerly Gordon], John (bap. 1661, d. 1733)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online edition, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11066> [hereafter ODNB; last accessed 14 July 2026].

22. Clyve Jones, 'Introduction: The Peerage and the House of Lords in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries' in idem (ed.), *A Pillar of the Constitution: The House of Lords in British Politics, 1640–1784* (London, 1989), 14.

23. M. W. McCahill, 'The Representative Peers of Scotland and Ireland', *Parliamentary History*, 28 (2009), 44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-0206.2009.00078.x>.

24. See Michael W. McCahill, 'The Scottish Peerage and the House of Lords in the Late Eighteenth Century', *Scottish Historical Review*, 51 (1972), 175–6; G. S. Holmes, 'The Hamilton Affair of 1711–1712: A Crisis in Anglo-Scottish Relations', *English Historical Review*, 77 (1962), 257–82, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/LXXVII.CCCIII.257>.

25. Mitchison, 'Government and the Highlands', 29; McCahill, 'Representative Peers', 44–6; Clyve Jones, '"This Way of Proceeding Would Remoove the Umbrage, and Uneasyness, of Courte, and Country Heere": The Earl of Abercorn's 1708 Scheme for Reforming the Election of the Scottish Representative Peers', *Scottish Historical Review*, 86 (2007), 27–31, <https://doi.org/10.1353/shr.2007.0040>.

Islay and later 3rd duke of Argyll.²⁶ The Squadrone, meanwhile, had emerged as an alternative, anti-Jacobite opposition to the Court Party during the early eighteenth century and had played a key role in securing the union. Thereafter, the faction tended to comprise those who opposed Clan Campbell's influence, but were resolved in their support of the revolution and the union, preventing them from turning to Jacobitism.²⁷ As Rosalind Mitchison argued, the Whig factions in Scotland remained relatively stable due to the limited opportunities available for the Scottish elite to shape the Whig regime: factions had to be able to challenge for seats to be effectual.²⁸ The factions were themselves encouraged at times by the ministry to prevent any one group, usually the Argathelians, from holding too much power in Scotland.²⁹ But the ministry was reliant on specific Scots to manage electoral affairs; Argyll and Ilay played a key role in this despite the ministry's concerns about their power. Factionalism was strengthened further by the lack of formal government structures in Scotland. The Secretary of State for Scotland's role was to represent the ministry and provide advice about Scottish affairs, but the position was vacant from 1725 to 1742. This led to an increased reliance on informal methods of political management, particularly through patronage and networks.³⁰ Thus, factions that were encouraged to support the ministry's agenda provided opportunities for political jostling.

The elected status of the Scots peers was a constant matter of complaint among them. John failed to gain re-election in 1708 during a disputed election and, with several others, sought to overturn the result, demonstrating the extent to which a seat in the Lords was viewed as a mark of respect and status.³¹ With the Tories in ascendancy under Queen Anne, John remained in the political wind until he was summoned to attend the coronation of George I in October 1714.³² As Szechi highlighted, most Scottish peers were notably poorer than their English counterparts, which left them reliant on appointments and pensions to sustain the expected London lifestyle as well as to maintain their estates at home. As such, episodes of dismissal like John experienced could prove damaging

26. Alexander Murdoch, 'Argathelians (act. 1705–c.1765)', *ODNB* (online edition, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/95333> [last accessed 14 July 2026].

27. Alexander Murdoch, 'Squadrone [squadrone volante] (act. 1704–c.1755)', *ODNB* (online edition, 2005), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/64145> [last accessed 14 July 2026].

28. Mitchison, 'Government and the Highlands', 29.

29. John Simpson, 'Who Steered the Gravy Train, 1707–1766?' in Phillipson and Mitchison (eds), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement*, 47–72, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780585060859-007>; Margaret S. Bricke, 'The Pelhams vs. Argyll: A Struggle for Mastery of Scotland, 1747–1748' *Scottish Historical Review*, 51 (1982), 157–65.

30. Mitchison, 'Government and the Highlands', 24.

31. Representation and copy to the House of Lords, 1708, Mount Stuart Trust (hereafter MST), Loudoun Papers, LO2/2/13; Report of the Lords Committee, 17 January 1708, MST, Loudoun Papers, LO2/2/16.

32. James Balfour (ed.), Richard Douglas, *The Scots Peerage* (Edinburgh, 1904–14), VIII, 354.

in both financial and reputational terms.³³ They could therefore generally be expected to associate themselves with the ministry so that they retained favour for the next election. John maintained his place on the court list from 1715 until his death in 1733 and sat consistently in the Lords during this period. William, 17th earl of Sutherland, made a bargain with Robert Walpole and Ilay ahead of the 1734 election, promising his support of the list in exchange for a place on it amid the excise crisis.³⁴ The crisis arose from Walpole's attempts to reduce land tax through a corresponding increase of duty on wine and tobacco. This was widely opposed, partly due to fears that it would interfere with rights of privacy.³⁵ Walpole's withdrawal of the bill was the first major defeat for his government, and William's bargain illustrates his wherewithal in negotiating for gain during this period of unrest. The 1734 election was subject to immediate protest regarding accusations that the ministry had used undue influence to gain votes. The effort taken to secure William's support illustrates his significance as head of Clan Sutherland, but the bargain also obliged William to align himself with the ministry. This highlights how coveted such roles were and their importance in managing the Whig regime in Scotland, as well as the ministry's belief that it was necessary to hold additional levers of control even over staunchly Whig peers.

Both Sutherlands benefited from their appointment as representative peers, although their actions in that role demonstrate the limited circumstances through which Scottish Whigs could shape the broader regime. Benefits came most directly through additional, salaried positions. Those who were already entrenched in the Whig state tended to gain the most from it, so it is unsurprising that peers were regularly given additional appointments.³⁶ John was made lord lieutenant of several Highland counties in 1715 and, after his exertions during the failed rising, was rewarded with an appointment as a knight of the thistle and a pension of £1,200 for his 'good services in Scotland.'³⁷ William, meanwhile, benefited from the family's engagement with the Whig regime even before succeeding to the earldom. His grandfather's interest in the Sutherland electorate

33. Daniel Szechi, 'Some Insights on the Scottish MPs and Peers Returned in the 1710 Election', *Scottish Historical Review*, 60 (1981), 61–2.

34. Eveline Cruickshanks, 'Sutherland, William, Lord Strathnaver (1708–50)', *History of Parliament Online*, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1715-1754/member/sutherland-william-1708-50> [last accessed 14 July 2026].

35. Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Cambridge, 1995), 122–6; Clyve Jones, 'The House of Lords and the Excise Crisis: The Storm and the Aftermath, 1733–5', *Parliamentary History*, 33 (2014), 160–200, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1750-0206.12094>.

36. Mitchison, 'Government and the Highlands', 29; Dziennik, 'Hanoverian Gaels', 182–6.

37. *Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer*, 15 September 1716. Sutherland was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Caithness, Cromarty, Moray, Nairn, Ross, and Sutherland in 1715, as well as Orkney in 1716 and Inverness in 1717; 'Lord Stanhope to Sutherland, Whitehall, 23 January 1716' in Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, II, 52–3; *Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post*, 27 July 1717.

facilitated William's election as MP for that constituency in 1727.³⁸ As part of the bargain that saw him elected to the Lords, William was also appointed a lord of police with a salary of £800 and a £1,200 pension.³⁹

Other benefits were tied to status rather than wealth, strengthening the Sutherlands' reputation in Whig circles in Scotland and beyond. John spent time in Hanover on the king's invitation in late 1716, playing a role in the investiture of Frederick, Prince of Wales.⁴⁰ Correspondence suggests a reciprocal relationship, highlighting John's 'zeal' for the king and George's 'esteem and affection' for the earl, of whom it was noted the king 'would be very pleased' to see in Hanover.⁴¹ Two years later, John was granted permission to augment his coat of arms with the Lyon-king, a marker of the king's affection, and he played a regular ceremonial role in events and royal services in London.⁴² This relationship allowed him, at times, to speak or write to the king directly. In March 1716, for instance, John apologised for missing much of the parliamentary session on account of illness and took the opportunity to raise other matters. He noted that:

Two years ago I took the liberty of saying to your Majesty that it would be for your interest to dismiss from the army such as are not well inclined to your service. I find there are too many of that kind still, and this is not the time to have indifferent, much less disaffected, persons to your government and royal person there; while those who fill their posts should, with all submission, be men of resolution and experience, and also well-affected to your Majesty.⁴³

John suggested it was his duty to share his opinion, which dated back to the succession. It is unclear exactly who he was referring to as 'not well inclined' to the king, but the letter was written while John was associated with the Squadron and, crucially, aware that Argyll had been questioning his role in the failed 1715–16 rising. Argyll had claimed that John's 'great conduct and greater services' were being magnified to 'lessen the honest Gentlemen of the North, whose

38. Cruickshanks, 'Sutherland, William', *History of Parliament Online*.

39. *Ibid.*; *Daily Post*, 28 November 1734.

40. Abel Boyer, *The Political State of Great Britain*, vol. 13 (London, 1717), 85–6; *Daily Courant*, 21 January 1717.

41. 'J. Robethon to Sutherland, Gohre, 24 October 1716', in Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, II, 66–7; 'Extract of Robethon to Lord Cadogan', Gohre, 5 November 1716', in *idem*, 67–8.

42. Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, I, 358; Alexander Areskine to Sutherland, 28 October 1718, National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), Sutherland Papers, 313/532; *St James' Evening Post*, 21–24 February 1719; Boyer, *Political State*, vol. 27 (London, 1724), 320.

43. 'John Sutherland to George I, Marlborough Street, 19 March 1716', in Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, II, 29–30.

zeal and expence has produced those services'.⁴⁴ If Sutherland was hinting that Argyll ought to be dismissed, he was not the only one doing so. General William Cadogan, Argyll's successor as commander of the army in Scotland, accused him of lacking zeal in his command and of working against the court's interest to advance both his and his brother's position.⁴⁵ Both Argyll and Ilay were dismissed from various offices that summer and temporarily lost the king's favour, turning to the opposition during the Whig Schism (1717–20), while John continued to align with the Squadrone and vote with the ministry. Although it is unlikely that John's opinion shaped the decision regarding Argyll's dismissal to any great extent, he was able to express his thoughts on the issue of disloyalty within the army when the subject was of keen interest to the king. Significantly, he framed his comments with clear markers of loyalism and Whig principles while demonstrating the consistency of his own position. John was ultimately rewarded for his services during the failed rising, while Argyll found his status at court reduced, albeit only temporarily.

William Sutherland, by contrast, had a less direct connection to George II and did not benefit from the same markers of status his grandfather enjoyed from both Hanoverian monarchs. This may have been partly a result of his preference for spending time undertaking improvements on his Sutherland estate over attending Parliament.⁴⁶ But it was also likely influenced by his close association with Frederick, which stretched back to William's grand tour in 1727 when John had been informed that his grandson was a 'fine gentleman, showing sense and discretion in everything he says and does, and therefore much liked by the prince.'⁴⁷ William Ferguson suggested it was impossible for courtiers and politicians to maintain good relations with the king and his eldest son simultaneously, with internal rivalry a constant feature of the Hanoverian dynasty.⁴⁸ Certainly William's association with Frederick contributed to his dismissal in 1747.⁴⁹ It

44. 'Duke of Argyll to Forbes, 17 February 1716', in H. R. Duff (ed.), *Culloden Papers* (London, 1815), 40. Regarding John's association with the Squadrone, see: Duncan Forbes to John MacFarlane, 11 April 1717, NLS, Pitfirrane Papers, 6415, f.15r. Regarding the broader war of words after the 1715–16 rising, see: 'Duke of Roxburgh to Sutherland, 13 February 1716' in Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, II, 61–2; Representation of Sutherland to George I Concerning the Fifteen, NLS, Sutherland Papers, 313/3232.

45. William Cadogan to Earl of Marlborough, Edinburgh, 19 December 1715, British Library (hereafter BL), Blenheim Papers, Add MS 61161; Alexander Murdoch, 'Campbell, John (1680–1743)', *ODNB* (online edition, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4513> [last accessed 14 July 2026]; William Ferguson, *Scotland, 1689 to the Present* (Edinburgh, 1968), 138.

46. Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, I, 402; 'Hugh Rose to William Sutherland, 10 August 1739', in Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, II, 240; Malcolm Bangor-Jones, 'Sheep Farming in Sutherland in the Eighteenth Century', *Agricultural History Review*, 50 (2002), 183–4.

47. Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, I, 401; Cruickshanks, 'Sutherland, William', *History of Parliament Online*.

48. Ferguson, *Scotland*, 138.

49. 'Prince Frederick to William Sutherland', in Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, II, 35.

is particularly interesting that William failed to benefit from the consolidation of the Scottish Patriot movement and its association with the Squadrone in the 1730s, other than through the initial bargain he made for election. As Watson argued, the Patriot movement emerged from concerns that Scotland's place within the union was being diminished, causing the Squadrone to abandon the Whigs and position themselves as the official opposition to Walpole. Squadrone peers were gradually purged in response.⁵⁰ After the 1736 Porteous Riots, the Argathelians split as Argyll joined the opposition and Ilay remained with Walpole.⁵¹ Despite William sticking with Ilay, a suggestion in early 1741 that he was to be appointed the king's high commissioner to the general assembly of the Church of Scotland proved unfounded.⁵² He maintained status as an elected peer at a time others were being stripped of this marker, but he certainly did not have the luxury of having the king's ear, nor seemingly did he gain from the losses of others. Increased hostility towards Highlanders also likely influenced William's failure to secure further benefit during Walpole's premiership. Walpole put significant resources into opposing Jacobitism through expansion of the state's intelligence system but, even as the threat from England reduced in the wake of the 1722 Atterbury Plot, General George Wade reported that disaffection and Jacobitism were widespread in the Highlands.⁵³ Reports of disaffection continued despite Wade's efforts to build roads and disarm the population, strengthening the general association between Jacobitism and the Highlands in the minds of many.

II.

Despite the differences in status they enjoyed, both earls showed similar determination to use their position to gain maximum benefit from their engagement with the Whig regime. Although John secured various appointments, he continued to seek further favour or financial redress. He argued that his family had been left in hardship due to the arrears of the regiment granted to him after the revolution, as well as further service. This was a regular feature of his correspondence,

50. Watson, 'Patriotism and Partisanship in Post-Union Scotland', 67; Jones, 'Peerage and the House of Lords', 14; Stephen Taylor and Clyve Jones, 'Viscount Bolingbroke and the Composition of an Opposition Protest in the House of Lords in 1734 on the Election of the Scottish Representative Peers', *Yale University Library Gazette*, 71 (1996), 22–3.

51. Murdoch, 'Campbell, John', *ODNB*.

52. *Weekly Miscellany*, 31 January 1741.

53. Paul S. Fritz, 'The Anti-Jacobite Intelligence System of the English Ministers, 1715–1745', *Historical Journal*, 16 (1973), 265–89, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00005860>; General Wade's Report, 1724, NRS, State Papers Scotland, RH2/5/12.

most often mentioned immediately after periods of military service.⁵⁴ In June 1719, he wrote to Charles Spencer, 3rd earl of Sunderland, to inform him of the success of Sutherland and Munro troops against Jacobite forces at the Battle of Glen Shiel and to request a recently vacated teller post. He claimed that his current salary was in arrears and that what he was owed 'does not amount to the interest of what I have laid out since the Revolution for carrying on that good work, and securing to us the Protestant succession'.⁵⁵ John deliberately referred to Whig ideals in seeking what he believed was just repayment for his loyalty and service. Yet despite an initially optimistic response, no appointment was forthcoming.⁵⁶ The following year, John appealed to James Stanhope, 1st earl Stanhope, stating that he was:

obliged to your lordship for this last favour in disappointing the designs of my enemies and supporting of a family that would not have been in so low circumstances as to want it, if it had not been [for] my zeal for the Revolution and to support King William upon the throne, as well as my indefatigable application to promote the protestant succession, to the detriment of my fortune above 30,000 pounds. The pleasure I have this day to see King George, for whom I have so long struggled, happily established upon the British throne, makes me forget all the losses and expenses I have been at. Yet, my dear lord, I should not be so forgot as to let a 1000 pounds yearly to myself and half as much for the education of my grandchildren, be all the consideration I have for the great sums due to me and for my services.⁵⁷

John requested Stanhope and Sunderland intercede directly with the king so he could gain 'some further mark of his majesty's favour', which did result in an appointment as collector of the chamberlainry of Ross.⁵⁸

These requests for redress and reward demonstrate that John was deliberate in his performance of Whig principles. Adopting the language of loyalty was considered the most likely route to gain reward and favour. It was also a necessary

54. Spain (rev.), 'Sutherland, John', *ODNB*; Memorial concerning the 15th Earl and the 1715 Rebellion, c.1715, NLS, Sutherland Papers, 313/3240.

55. 'Sutherland to Earl of Sunderland, Marlborough Street, 19 June 1719', in Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, II, 223–4; 'Sutherland to Stanhope, 19 June 1719' in *ibid.*, 224.

56. 'Duke of Montrose to Sutherland, Hanover, 11 July 1719', in Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, II, 69; Montrose to Sutherland, 21 August 1719, NLS, Sutherland Papers, 313/532; Montrose to Sutherland, 29 August 1719, NLS, Sutherland Papers, 313/532.

57. 'Sutherland to Stanhope, Marlborough Street, 1 August 1720', in Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, II, 69–70; 'Sutherland to Sunderland, Marlborough Street, 25 July 1720', in *ibid.*, 225.

58. 'Sutherland to Stanhope, Marlborough Street, 1 August 1720', in Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, II, 69–70. Regarding John's appointment as collector of the chamberlainry, see 'Roxburgh to Sutherland, Broxmouth, 2 August 1720', in Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, II, 70–71.

and expected aspect of Scottish political life in the face of the continuing Jacobite threat. Given that Highlanders were viewed with a generalised suspicion, it was even more essential for elites like John to make strategic declarations that drew explicitly on Whig principles. He had, indeed, supported the revolution and Hanoverian Succession, and his strong Presbyterian identity naturally inclined him away from Jacobitism and towards Whiggism. As we have seen, military and political service also promised opportunities for financial reward and status. John's careful use of language illustrates the intertwined nature of sincere and performative principle in eighteenth-century Scottish political culture.

John's experiences also highlight that performative expressions of Whiggism could have an impact, albeit a limited one. Despite the chamberlainry appointment, he remained in financial arrears, and neither his son William, Lord Strathnaver, nor his grandson were able to reverse the family's fortunes. Strathnaver had claimed over £1,000 for receipts paid for arms surrendered by Sutherland tenants as per the 1716 Disarming Act before his death in 1720, yet William was still petitioning for payment in 1730.⁵⁹ The commissioners of excise had raised suspicions of potential fraud with some of the receipts and, despite William's complaints that concerns over five ought not prevent payment of the other thirteen, he failed to gain redress. Dziennik outlined similar concerns of fraud in the returns of the Independent Companies. Aware that the government would only commit resources to the Highlands while it was a necessity, officers submitted fraudulent returns to maximise their financial benefit from the state.⁶⁰ Although a separate issue, payments related to the Disarming Act were underpinned by similar concerns on both sides. If Strathnaver, or those acting on his behalf, did submit fraudulent receipts, such action did not necessarily lessen their overarching adherence to Whig principles. Rather, it shows the limited opportunities available for Highland elites to benefit from engaging with the fiscal-military state and the tension between their more flexible loyalism and the rigid understanding of state officials. The family debt was an additional factor that both John and William had to consider when weighing their actions. Crucially, continued engagement offered the best chance to gain at least some recompense, as John's earlier experiences suggested.

There were, therefore, numerous reasons for the Sutherlands to maintain consistent support for the Whig regime and the various ministries seeking to strengthen it. That they found themselves often in agreement regarding policy made the decision easier. Yet both were willing to demonstrate discontent or opposition on occasion. In April 1716, John joined with other Scots peers in seeking redress of their longstanding grievance that they were representative rather

59. 2. Geo I, c.54; Inventory of Receipts, 1716, NLS, Sutherland Papers, 313/3235; Bond re. Appreciation of Arms, NLS, Sutherland Papers, 1730–3, 313/3238.

60. Dziennik, 'Hanoverian Gaels', 174, 187–91.

than hereditary peers.⁶¹ No change was forthcoming, but the issue did provide a bargaining chip during the Whig Schism, and the Sunderland-Stanhope ministry included a proposed remedy as part of the 1719 Peerage Bill, which was eventually defeated.⁶² Questions were also raised regarding John's loyalty to Walpole in the early 1730s as he associated himself with men who moved into opposition. He was listed as a potential ministerial opponent during the initial debates regarding the question of censure for the South Sea Company directors after failing to attend a vote in May, despite Walpole having written to him three days earlier begging him to attend parliament.⁶³ His absence may have been due to illness rather than opposition, as he did vote against the censure a week later, but the fact that Walpole had been so concerned to write to him on the matter shows that questions existed regarding the strength of his loyalty. It also indicates the level of opposition the Prime Minister was facing and the important role Scots peers and MPs could play in shaping politics during periods of strong opposition.

Given the bargain William made to secure his place as one of the sixteen peers, as well as his relative lack of interest in attending parliament regularly, it is unsurprising that he proved largely willing to align with the ministry of the day. He remained loyal to Walpole until the latter's resignation and thereafter supported the Carteret and Broad Bottom ministries in turn. However, after the failed 1745–6 rising, William broke with the ministry by voting against the committal of the Heritable Jurisdiction bill in 1747.⁶⁴ The bill passed despite Scottish opposition. This is unsurprising given the strength of anti-Jacobite feeling and the connection many English commentators drew between current legal frameworks and Jacobitism.⁶⁵ But Scottish elites were able to secure key concessions to the bill; landowners retained some jurisdiction over baron courts, indicating both their ability to shape the fiscal-military state and the state's limitations.⁶⁶ Although they were not a large enough bloc to alter the ministerial agenda themselves, Scottish politicians could and did frustrate the ministry in its

61. Postscript, 4 April 1716, MST, Loudoun Papers, LO3/46. See also Shin Matsuzono, "'Could the Scots Become True British?' The Prelude to the Scottish Peerage Bill, 1706–16", in Pentland and Davis (eds), *Liberty, Property and Popular Politics*, 31–6.

62. Clyve Jones, "'Venice Preserv'd; or A Plot Discovered': The Political and Social Context of the Peerage Bill of 1719", in idem, *Pillar of the Constitution*, 86.

63. Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, I, 366; Jones, 'Excise Crisis,' 186–93.

64. Stephen Taylor and Clyve Jones (eds), *Tory and Whig: The Parliamentary Papers of Edward Harley, third Earl of Oxford, and William Hay, MP for Seaford 1716–53* (Suffolk, 1998), 81.

65. Andrew Fletcher and Humphrey Bland, 'Proposals for Civilizing the Barbarous and Rebellious Parts of the Highlands of Scotland', 1747, NRS, RH2/4/366, ff.145–52; Dziennik, "'Under ye Lash'", 615–16.

66. Regarding their ability to secure concessions, see Dziennik, "'Under ye Lash'", 617–19.

efforts to secure the Whig regime in Scotland when the actions proposed proved contentious.

Elections were another aspect of political management through which elites could express a range of responses to the fiscal-military state. After the union, Scotland's forty-five MPs were divided between thirty county and fifteen burgh seats. Fourteen of the latter comprised a group of parishes, which used a system of delegated representation to elect one member to represent the district. The earls exerted significant influence over voters for the Sutherland County seat and held control of Dornoch's vote for the Tain (northern) Burghs seat.⁶⁷ Argyll's turn to the opposition manufactured a ministerial loss in Scotland in 1741, as the duke's interest ensured over half the seats were won by Squadrone candidates.⁶⁸ Ilay, meanwhile, relied on William to secure Sutherland and managed to call on the interest of the earl, as well as Dingwall delegate and Jacobite George Mackenzie, 3rd earl of Cromartie, for Tain.⁶⁹ This illustrates the importance of patronage and kith and kin networks in shaping the Whig regime in Scotland; even ardent Whigs like Ilay and William were willing to draw on Jacobite support to achieve their ends. It was, ultimately, an issue of election management that caused William's dismissal as he aligned with Frederick to support a parliamentary candidate in Embo who was opposed by George II and the ministry.⁷⁰ William's decision was driven by personal allegiance and highlights the range of contexts elites drew upon when deciding how to act. Argyll's death in 1743, which left Ilay as the sole political manager in Scotland, and the recent defeat of the Forty-Five, alongside the increase in anti-Highland sentiment it had occasioned, meant there was no shared opposition for William to capitalise on when he opposed the ministry. This instead led to his exclusion from the Whig regime.

The Whig regime in Scotland was far from monolithic or static. Even the most committed adherents to the Whig cause, the revolution and the union were not averse to expressing discontent or even using their influence to try and bring down a ministry. In doing so, they did not necessarily abandon Whig principles, even if their actions provided an opportunity for their opponents to tar them with accusations of Jacobitism. The Sutherlands proved hesitant to display

67. Cruickshanks, 'Sutherland, William', *History of Parliament Online*; *Daily Post*, 10 May 1722; Eveline Cruickshanks, 'Sutherland (County)', *History of Parliament Online*, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1715-1754/constituencies/sutherland> [last accessed 14 July 2026]; David Wilkinson, 'Tain (Northern) Burghs', *History of Parliament Online*, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1690-1715/constituencies/tain-%28northern%29-burghs> [last accessed 14 July 2026]. Tain Burghs consisted of Dornoch, Wick, Kirkwall, Tain and Dingwall.

68. Murdoch, *People Above*, 32.

69. Cruickshanks, 'Sutherland (County)'; Wilkinson, 'Tain (Northern) Burghs'. Although the election was declared void after Walpole's fall, Sutherland was again instrumental in securing the return of the ministerial candidate for Tain Burghs.

70. Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, I, 427.

opposition, though they did so on occasion. And displays of performative principle were to the fore as they repeatedly sought to benefit from their engagement with the state and to overcome the disadvantage of their Highland identity.

III.

A combination of influences and local contexts likewise drove the earls during the military campaigns against the Jacobites. Continued Jacobite activity showed that political management alone could not consolidate the Whig regime. There was, however, little military intervention in Scotland until after 1716, and a deliberate militarisation strategy was only systematically pursued after the failed 1745–6 rising.⁷¹ The state's reliance on local elites to implement its agenda, coupled with the initially limited nature of military intervention in Scotland, meant that Highlanders viewed military service primarily as an opportunity, rather than a threat, at least until the 1740s. The region's reputation for disaffection and banditry meant independent companies were actively patrolling the Highlands for much of the Jacobite era. Local troops were preferred for such service, given their familiarity with the terrain and climate, the long tradition of irregular warfare in the region and the belief that clanship was an inherently militaristic system.⁷² The military risings provided additional opportunities as local volunteers were raised by Lord Lieutenants to act as auxiliaries in 1715–16. In 1745–6, such troops were organised primarily into militia units and independent companies.⁷³ The question of whether to undertake military service, and for whom, was a significant one for elites like the Sutherlands to consider. While loyal service could result in reward, there were also inherent risks beyond merely picking the losing side. Questions regarding the strength of an individual's commitment or effectiveness could lead to the loss of influence and appointments. More commonly, the money invested was simply not recouped. Military appointments provided patronage, a chance to reward family and friends and opportunities to extend political networks and influence within Britain and the wider Empire.⁷⁴ It also provided a much-needed financial benefit for elites, given the relative lack of opportunities for advancement within the fiscal-military state. As William's experiences show, the reality was often much more complex: accusations

71. Martin, *British Army in Scotland and North America*, 35–6, 69–82.

72. *Ibid.*, 57–8. Regarding the tradition of irregular warfare in the Highlands, see John L. Roberts, *Clan, King and Covenant: History of the Highland Clans from the Civil War to the Glencoe Massacre* (Edinburgh, 2000).

73. Daniel Szechi, *1715: The Great Jacobite Rebellion* (New Haven and London, 2006); Peter Simpson, *The Independent Highland Companies, 1603–1760* (Edinburgh, 1996), 120–30.

74. Dziennik, 'Hanoverian Gaels', 185; Victoria Henshaw, *Scotland and the British Army, 1700–1750: Defending the Union* (London, 2014), 96–106.

of desertion, ineffectiveness and fraud plagued those who engaged in military service for the Whig regime.

John's appointment as lord lieutenant of the northern counties in 1715 came in response to rumours of an imminent Jacobite rising. He agreed to raise Highlanders to keep the peace in that region and prevent any rebels from marching south.⁷⁵ It is unsurprising that he was offered a military command given his prior service, and it was believed that 'his Lordship's Interest in those Countys, with his known Zeal and Bravery, will have a very great Influence in keeping the peace in that part of the Country.'⁷⁶ His influence proved as beneficial as the ministry hoped, as John and his fellow northern commanders quickly mustered a loyalist force of approximately 3,000 men and successfully repelled attacks on Culloden House and Brodie Castle.⁷⁷ His quick response to the news of a Jacobite attempt, setting out from London just a week after John Erskine, 6th earl of Mar, raised the Jacobite standard at Braemar on 6 September, illustrates both the strength of his loyalism and his desire to be seen as acting vigorously in defence of the Hanoverian Succession.

William was similarly vigorous in responding to rumours of Jacobite activity. The earl had offered to raise his clan in response to rumours of a French-sponsored Jacobite invasion in 1744, and he repeated his offer immediately upon hearing of Charles Edward Stuart's landing.⁷⁸ His proactive response indicates his genuine desire to serve the state. But, like his grandfather, William was also strategic in his performance of Whig principles, writing in a memorial after the rising that it was 'Incumbent on every Loyal Subject to oppose Rebellion in its Infancy'.⁷⁹ He likewise informed the Treasury that his actions were prompted by 'affection and zeal for the service of His Majesty and Government'.⁸⁰ This emphasis is unsurprising, given that he was seeking repayment of money he claimed to have paid out at the time. However, his quick compliance with Duncan Forbes of Culloden's request that he raise two independent companies supports his claim that matters of principle were a driving factor influencing his decision-making, again showing that genuine and performative principle were interconnected. William's staunch adherence to the Whig cause aligns with Whatley's identification of Presbyterianism as a 'civil religion' for many of its followers.⁸¹ The 1712 Patronage Act had restored the right of landowners to present ministers for

75. *Evening Post*, 10–13 September 1715; *Flying Post*, 29 September–1 October 1715; *Daily Courant*, 4 October 1715.

76. *Flying Post*, 10–13 September 1715.

77. *Flying Post*, 13–15 October 1715.

78. Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, I, 403–4; 'Earl of Sutherland to Forbes, 11 September 1745' in Duff, *Culloden Papers*, 401.

79. State of Facts relating to the Earl of Sutherland, 1746, NLS, Sutherland Papers, 313/3255.

80. Memorial of William, Earl of Sutherland, 1746, NLS, Sutherland Papers, 313/3256.

81. Whatley, 'Reformed Religion', 71.

vacant parishes. William had utilised this ecclesiastical patronage in Farr in 1732, appointing John Skeldoch against the wishes of the congregation.⁸² Although his appointment of Skeldoch was likely for personal benefit, due to their shared interest in improvement, William made use of parish ministers for the Whig cause during the rising. He first ordered them to provide a return of the able-bodied men in their parish to aid recruiting and later to admonish deserters into returning to their posts.⁸³ The Presbytery of Dornoch explicitly linked the Protestant and anti-Jacobite interests when they specified that his 'Early appearance' and actions in raising troops for the government were a testament to his duty.⁸⁴

Both Sutherlands acted vigorously on behalf of the Crown during the risings, but both faced accusations of ineffectiveness or disloyalty. The specific challenges each had to navigate demonstrate developing local contexts that influenced their engagement with the fiscal-military state. John evidently took the regional nature of his appointment to heart, refusing repeated appeals from John Murray, 1st duke of Atholl, for him to march to Perthshire and instead focusing on hindering William Mackenzie, 5th earl of Seaforth's attempts to march south.⁸⁵ On 8 October 1715, John led a force of approximately 1,800 men to attack Seaforth at Alness, but he retreated without engagement after judging Seaforth to have superior numbers.⁸⁶ While John's memorial suggested his troops remained active after this and delayed Seaforth's advance, Szechi suggests the near engagement at Alness was a debacle that caused John to flee and allowed Seaforth to plunder nearby Whig territory, leaving Whig efforts at a standstill until the arrival of Lord Lovat.⁸⁷ John's concern to emphasise his contribution was no doubt a result of his developing rivalry with Lovat. Despite it being Lovat who directed the British capture of Inverness Castle, it was John who benefitted from this victory. He was given a delivery of money, arms and ammunition and promoted to lieutenant general due to 'the Trust his Majesty reposes in his Lordship's Loyalty, good Affection, and Skill in Military Affairs.'⁸⁸ John's concern to emphasise his own contribution to British endeavours in the north paid off and illustrates that one important context

82. 10 Ann. c.21; Laurence A. B. Whitley, *A Great Grievance: Ecclesiastical Lay Patronage in Scotland until 1750* (Eugene, OR, 2013); Malcolm Bangor-Jones, 'From Clanship to Crofting: Landownership, Economy and the Church in the Province of Strathnaver', in John R. Baldwin (ed.), *The Province of Strathnaver* (Scottish Society for Northern Studies, 2000), 78.

83. State of Facts, NLS, 313/3255.

84. Ibid.

85. *Flying Post*, 11–13 October 1715; *Flying Post*, 13–15 October 1715; Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, II, 45–6.

86. *London Gazette*, 25–27 October 1715.

87. Representation Concerning the Fifteen, NLS, Sutherland Papers, 313/3232.

88. Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, I, 337; *Post Man and the Historical Account*, 24–26 November 1715; *Flying Post*, 24–6 November 1715.

influencing his military actions was his determination to ensure his status, place and reputation.

Another key context was local customs and norms, which were to the detriment of securing the Whig regime. Szechi highlighted the 'shadowboxing' nature of the Highland campaign, where personal networks bridged the divide between Whigs and Jacobites. This ensured little bloodshed during the campaign. Instead, commanders sought to raise as many troops as possible and to manoeuvre into a strong position to cause the opposition forces to retreat, as John's had from Alness and the Jacobites had from Inverness.⁸⁹ John's actions in the Highlands led him to fulfil the expectations of his command as he successfully secured the submission of key Jacobite commanders. However, his adherence to local norms and customs limited the military effectiveness of his campaign, if not his efforts, demonstrating a weakness of the fiscal-military state, given that a decisive victory in the Highlands would have contributed significantly to the extinguishing of the rising elsewhere.

William, meanwhile, was influenced by different contexts throughout his military service. Despite the authority he held as clan chief to raise the troops Forbes requested, he found it difficult to persuade sufficient volunteers to enlist. He had to offer concessions, including a promise to forgive rent arrears and to support the families of any killed in service, in order to raise sufficient numbers.⁹⁰ Internal tensions arose from chiefs pursuing improvement and commercialisation policies, eroding the traditional markers of clanship. The outbreak of insurrection in 1745 provided an opportunity for disaffected clansmen to mobilise for one side or the other in defiance of their chiefs' wishes and meant that money and other inducements, as well as threats and coercion, were commonly employed to mobilise the clan.⁹¹ In acting as he did, and in the difficulties he encountered, William was typical of the Whig Highland elite during the 1745–6 rising. Even when the men were raised, he and other chiefs had to contend with high rates of desertion, which raised questions regarding the strength of his own loyalty.⁹² Highland troops viewed military service within the context of agricultural needs and demanded furlough as part of their terms of service so they

89. Szechi, 1715, 182–5; *Daily Courant*, 19 December 1715.

90. State of Facts, NLS, 313/3255.

91. Macinnes, *Clanship*, 166–8, 190. Allan Kennedy has demonstrated that such tensions were developing even prior to the revolution. See: Allan Kennedy, 'Rebellion, Government and the Scottish Response to Argyll's Rising of 1685', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 36 (2016), 40–59, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jshs.2016.0167>.

92. Henshaw, *Scotland and the British Army*, 127. For more on the issue of desertion in 1745–6, see Nicola Martin, 'Inculcating Loyalty in the Highlands and Beyond, c.1745–84', *Atlantic Studies*, 21 (2024), 265–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2023.2240030>.

could assist with the harvest.⁹³ William was willing to work with such demands, arguing his men had returned to their homes when the Jacobites marched to England because they ‘possessed a natural desire to return for the harvest’ and were surplus to requirements, confident they would return when required.⁹⁴

Despite William’s conviction that his troops would return and despite both his and his clansmen’s actions during the rising, rumours regarding his loyalty abounded. When he first raised troops for Forbes, he faced accusations that he had been slow to do so and had not raised a sufficient number. This caused him to plead with Forbes to put a stop ‘to such malicious suggestions and insinuations’ and to offer himself and the entire clan should they be required.⁹⁵ He regularly reaffirmed his loyalty and zeal throughout the rising and sent numerous petitions documenting his actions in its aftermath.⁹⁶ Rumours of disloyalty were certainly stoked by William’s continued association with Jacobites such as Cromartie, as well as the machinations of his rivals, including Alexander Brodie, Lord Lyon, who accused him of granting protection to a Jacobite.⁹⁷ These rumours also reflect the general distrust many within the British army and government felt towards the Highland troops and population at large. Despite employing Highlanders, British commander Prince William Augustus, duke of Cumberland, did not trust them. He frequently referenced their disloyalty and indiscipline and even branded Forbes ‘arrant Highland mad.’⁹⁸ Such ideas were not confined to English officials and officers. Although John Dalrymple, 2nd earl of Stair, had proposed granting commissions for independent companies, he indicated that he opposed the idea of arming Highlanders. He only suggested it through necessity because most of the army was abroad, indicating that some Scottish elites shared common suspicions of Highlanders.⁹⁹ The principled nature of William’s support for the Whig cause was generally agreed on in London, with Secretary at War Henry Fox and Cumberland both commenting favourably on his zeal. Yet he was never fully repaid what he claimed to have expended, with Fox questioning the expense he had been put to, suggesting at least some level of lingering distrust.¹⁰⁰

93. Dziennik, ‘Hanoverian Gaels’, 194–5; Andrew Mackillop, ‘*More Fruitful than the Soil*’: *Army, Empire and the Scottish Highlands, 1715–1815* (East Linton, 2000), 8, 107.

94. Quoted in Henshaw, *Scotland and the British Army*, 126–7.

95. ‘Sutherland to Forbes, Dunrobin, 31 December 1745,’ in Duff, *Culloden Papers*, 467.

96. *Ibid.*, Sutherland to Duke of Cumberland, 19 April 1746, Royal Archives (hereafter RA), CP/MAIN/21 f.411–411b; Estimate re. Sutherland militia 1746, RA, CP/MAIN/20 f.405–405c; Sutherland to Henry Pelham, RA, CP/MAIN/21 f.417–417f.

97. Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, I, 425; ‘Alexander Brodie to Duke of Newcastle, 277 December 1746’, in Duncan Warrand (ed.), *More Culloden Papers*, 5 vols (Inverness, 1930), V, 142.

98. ‘Cumberland to Newcastle, 30 April 1746’, in *ibid.*, 71.

99. Earl of Stair to Earl of Loudoun, 22 August 1745, Huntington Library, Loudoun Papers (SCO), 7644.

100. Fraser, *Sutherland Book*, I, 426; Cumberland to Sutherland, 23 June 1747, NLS, Sutherland Papers, 313/3259.

Although it was not pursued with the same consistency as political management, military intervention was just as vital in the creation and consolidation of the Whig regime in Scotland. The earls of Sutherland were active loyalists during all Jacobite risings, making a clear contribution to the fiscal-military state. Their military exertions influenced their role in political affairs, albeit negatively in William's case. This highlights the interconnected nature of politics, the military and less formal measures of influence, including patronage and networks, as the state sought to consolidate the Whig regime in Scotland. John and William's engagement with military service was typical of Highland elites; it was not only entirely possible, but necessary, for ideas of principle to coexist alongside more pragmatic and immediate considerations.

IV.

The Sutherlands' experiences of political management and military service provide a significant case study of Highland elite engagement with the Whig regime. Their actions in both spheres demonstrate a general and consistent support for the ministry's agenda, particularly as it related to defeating Jacobitism and securing the revolution, union and Hanoverian succession. They were, then, Whig loyalists. Yet they drew on a range of contexts and local circumstances alongside their Presbyterian identity when deciding whether, and how far, to support the state. In doing so, they operated on a spectrum of Whig loyalism: not simply acting solely for the state's interest but also seeking to gain maximum benefit from their actions, adapting to local contexts and, on occasion, expressing opposition or discontent. The Sutherlands were strategic in their performance of principle, careful to frame requests for money or place in the language of Whig loyalism, setting out their prior actions for the state in a way that emphasised the consistency of their position since the revolution.

The experiences of the Sutherlands provide important insights into British state formation and Scottish political culture during the Jacobite era. Macinnes suggested that the Jacobite cause was 'inherently if not fatally weakened' by its inability to secure the ranks of the Scottish nobility on a consistent basis.¹⁰¹ It was, ultimately, the ability of many Scottish elites to benefit from the consolidation of the Whig regime that prevented the Jacobites from securing that support. Highlanders like the Sutherlands could play a role in the political and military management of Scotland because the British fiscal-military state was reliant on local elites to implement its policies, inculcate loyalty and oppose Jacobitism. Aligning with the state offered those elites opportunities for place,

101. Macinnes, *Clanship*, 198.

status and patronage wherein those who acted loyally were the most likely to benefit from further opportunities.¹⁰² But supporting the Whig regime did not necessarily equate to supporting every ministerial policy or abandoning local or personal interests. The ministry set the agenda at Whitehall, but the culture of cooperation underpinning the fiscal-military state ensured various individuals and factions were able to shape it, even though the opportunities to do so were somewhat limited for Scottish elites.¹⁰³ While they never held sufficient power to alter the ministry's agenda, they were able to gain certain concessions and to demonstrate discontent with specific policies, or even specific ministries, without abandoning core Whig ideals. As such, they actively contributed to British state formation in the post-union decades and, by remaining aligned with the Whig interest, to the defeat of Jacobitism.

Highland elites acted similarly to other Scottish elites, but had to be particularly strategic in their performance of principle and found their opportunities to integrate into the British state further limited by their contested status. Amid the continuing threat of Jacobitism, the 'othering' of Highlanders made it vital for Highland elites like the Sutherlands to frame their actions clearly in the language of Whig principles. In doing so they also engaged in a strategic performance of loyalism to gain reward, recompense and recognition. Although they complained that they remained in significant debt, both John and William were rewarded for their service to the state, often as a direct response to letters and petitions emphasising their prior exertions. In this way, the state rewarded performative principle, recognising that it was intertwined with genuine principle and served to encourage the latter. Yet there was also significant tension between the spectrum of loyalism on which Highland elites operated and the state's binary conception of loyal/disloyal. Underpinning the fiscal-military state was the idea that loyalty was a necessity for domestic and imperial security and a belief that the needs of the state were paramount. Those who failed to show due submission and adherence to the British state could therefore be considered disloyal, even if they were not actively rebelling against it.¹⁰⁴ This was even more relevant for Highlanders, given the common association of the population with Jacobitism, and, therefore, disloyalty. This binary understanding of loyal/disloyal, coupled with the assumed disloyalty of Highlanders, provided little room for recognition of the range of contexts and motivations that drove the decision-making of Highland elites. This tension helps to explain why William lost the support of the Whig regime in 1747 despite his military service in 1745–6. Importantly, it also demonstrates both the limits of Highland integration into the British state during the Jacobite era, and why Highland elites like the Sutherlands

102. Dziennik, 'Hanoverian Gaels', 195.

103. Page, *Britain and the Seventy Years War*, 63.

104. Martin, *British Army in Scotland and North America*, 14–18.

sought maximum benefit from their service, recognising how quickly they could find themselves excluded.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to extend their thanks to the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry KBE for their kind permission to cite from the Buccleuch Papers, and to the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback and suggestions.