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Hechter Roundtable

This roundtable asks a range of scholars to reflect on the influence of Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* on both their own work and the development of their field since its appearance in 1975. It takes up questions of historical narrative, literary imagination and political context to assess how the book has been received and critiqued. In doing so it germinates a conversation about the current state of the field of Irish and Scottish Studies and its place in the ongoing debates surrounding British identity and state formation, and well as the cultural and literary resistances offered to those centrifugal forces across the archipelago. This is the first part of a conversation which is to continue in *Studies in Scottish Literature* and is convened by the editors of the two journals.

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Internal Colonialism at 50

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Michael Hechter's bold and provocative study of ethnic identity and national development in the UK and Ireland, *Internal Colonialism*, was published 50 years ago, in 1975, garnering what Hechter himself describes as a 'mixed reception'.[1] There was enthusiasm among the book's Irish and Welsh readers, indifference in England (Hechter writes that the *Times Literary Supplement* refused to review the book), and outright hostility in Scotland. As several contributors in our linked-issue symposium on *Internal Colonialism* at 50 suggest, there are solid reasons for the indifference and hostility, as well as, of course, for the enthusiasm: the book's statistical analysis of differentiation across nations is flawed; it gets key historical details wrong (Hechter himself admits in the book's Preface that his formal training in history is 'slight'); it fails to differentiate the important regional, linguistic, and religious division between Highland and Lowland Scotland; and it largely ignores the role that the British empire – including its collapse in the 1950s and 1960s – played in the various nationalisms that persisted in post-industrialised Britain.[2] This last is especially surprising given that Hechter, a doctoral student of Immanuel Wallerstein, claims that he initially came to this project through an understanding of the 'many Irish parallels to the development of nationalism in West Africa'. He even compares his approach to that of Franz Fanon's in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961).[3] As both Alexander Dick and James Stafford point out, *Internal Colonialism* was a product of – in Stafford's words – the 'global conflagrations of the 1960s', which included the emergence of Black nationalism and the Civil Rights movement in the US, and the Vietnam War and so-called third-world liberation struggles happening around the world. But the colonial emphasised in the book really is internal.

Still, the book hit a nerve when it was published, especially, it seems, if you were a young student or graduate student, as Ciaran Brady and Leith Davis were, in the years when it first circulated. *Internal Colonialism* moved the argu-

1. Michael Hechter, 'Internal Colonialism Revisited' in Edward Tiryakian and Roger Rogowski (eds), *New Nationalisms of the Developed West* (London, 1985), 19.

2. Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (Berkeley, 1975), xiii.

3. Ibid., xiii–xv.

ment about nationalism beyond the Whig-centered diffusionist models of development that had long dominated the field and outlined a new model which Hechter called – following V.I. Lenin, Antonio Gramsci, and a number of Latin American sociologists – internal colonialism. Where the diffusionist model suggested that contact between core and periphery, accelerated by industrialisation, results in a shared sense of commonality and 'social structural convergence', the internal colonial model, premised for Hechter on the example of Ireland, foregrounds a metropolitan core or national centre that comes to 'dominate the periphery politically and to exploit it materially'.[4] The model thus offers a way to account for the persistence of nationalism on the periphery after prolonged contact and explains why, for example, the Scottish National Party (SNP) was experiencing an electoral surge as late as the 1960s. But the approach also offered the possibility of bringing the history of British national development into conversation with the most exciting work being done in colonial, and what would soon be called 'postcolonial', studies, including by such contemporaries of Hechter's as Fanon, Albert Memmi, and Edward Said. This was an exciting development for many. If the book's impact and reach never quite extended to that of another work on the subject of nationalism – Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, published just a few years later, in 1983 – it nevertheless opened a door, as Anderson's book also did, to exploring the development and persistence of national identity.

Like *Imagined Communities*, Hechter's book exerted an outsized influence on literary studies. This was despite Hechter's own pronounced commitment to structural analysis of a kind that served to sideline ideological commitment – something Brady's contribution below explores. Hechter's historical sociology is unlike Anderson's political theory, is more interested in detailing the cultural, or really, ethnic, division of labour, meaning 'the differential allocation of social roles with the society', than he is in examining capital-C Culture itself.[5] The spread of newspapers to the distant reaches of the periphery is mentioned in passing but it is not dwelled upon in any sustained way. There is no consideration of what Anderson calls 'print capitalism' or of the novel and the newspaper as the two key forms of modernity that, in Anderson's words, 'made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate to others, in profoundly new ways'.[6] With Hechter, the connection to literary studies is less direct as there is no discussion in the book of the role that literature, or culture more generally, plays in producing, maintaining, and complicating national identity. But as Leith Davis notes in her contribution to the symposium,

4. Ibid., 9, 73.
5. Ibid., 38.
6. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991), 36.

Hechter's book provided an 'invitation' for others to explore these directions. Despite its statistical flaws and historical errors, for many literary scholars something just felt right about Hechter's argument (our students might call this a 'vibe' thing). They didn't have numbers or graphs or maps to back this sense up. But they had novels and poems and songs in which what Hechter described as internal colonialism seemed to be on full display. As Janet Sorensen writes in her introduction to a set of essays on 'Internal Colonialism and the British Novel', Hechter's positing of internal colonial dynamics at work within a British national context 'provides a critical strategy for highlighting the discontinuities of national space, as well as the ruptures which inhere within national subjects', both of which feature pronouncedly in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels.[7] This is not to say that there wasn't or isn't critical pushback among literary scholars against Hechter's core-periphery model: Matthew Wickman's essay in the symposium introduced by Sorensen is one example of this, as is his book about Scotland's 'Romantick' Highlands.[8] But Katie Trumpener's pioneering study of 'the Romantic Novel and the British empire', *Bardic Nationalism* (1997), a book which focuses precisely on the discontinuities of national space, seems unthinkable without Hechter's thesis.

And the literature itself makes such a focus possible. Take, for example, Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814), the book often regarded as the first historical novel. Set in the eighteenth century, during the 1745 Jacobite Uprising, the novel tells the story – through its titular hero, Edward Waverley – of Scotland's assimilation into modern Britain. Waverley is an English soldier who, upon traveling to the Scottish Highlands and finding himself almost romantically transfixed by the charismatic Highland chief, Fergus Mac-Ivor, and his beautiful sister, Flora, temporarily joins the Jacobite cause. Edward eventually comes to his senses, in time to save himself from the fate of Fergus and the other Jacobite supporters. His purchase of an estate in the Scottish Lowlands and his proposal of marriage to the steadier, less romantic, Rose Bradwardine, recall the endings of the Irish national tales, which often use the marriage of an Englishman and a woman from the Irish periphery to symbolise the proper union of the two nations. As Franco Moretti argues, historical novels such as *Waverley* are 'not just stories "of" the border but of its erasure, and of the incorporation of the internal periphery into the larger unit of the state'.[9] This sounds a lot like the diffusion model of national

7. Janet Sorensen, 'Internal Colonialism and the British Novel', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 15.1 (2002), 55.

8. Matthew Wickman, 'Of Probability, Romance, and the Spatial Dimensions of Eighteenth-Century Narrative', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 15.1 (2002), 59–80. See also Wickman, *The Ruins of Experience: Scotland's "Romantick" Highlands and the Birth of the Modern Witness* (Philadelphia, 2007), and Leith Davis's 'Re-reading Internal Colonialism: A Self-Dialogue', in this symposium.

9. Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900* (London, 1998), 40.

development as Hechter describes it. And Scott himself seems to support such an assertion when, at the end of *Waverley*, in a 'Postscript, which should have been a Preface', he describes the changes that followed the defeat of the Jacobites in 1746: '[t]he gradual influx of wealth, and extension of commerce', he writes, 'have since united to render the present people of Scotland a class of beings as different from their grandfathers, as the existing English are from those of Queen Elizabeth's time'.[10] Scott's next two novels, *Guy Mannering* (1815) and *The Antiquary* (1816) complete the 'series', as Scott calls it in the Advertisement to *The Antiquary*. The two novels are set in the successive generations that followed the 1740s and attend to what Scott describes as 'the class of society who are the last to feel the influence of that general polish which assimilates the manners of different nations'.[11]

However, a careful reading of *Waverley* reveals the shortcomings of this seeming diffusionist plotline. For one, Scott credits military intervention first and foremost for this rapid transformation, highlighting 'the destruction of the patriarchal power of the Highland chiefs' and 'the total eradication of the Jacobite party'.[12] And while the violence suggested by the words 'destruction' and 'eradication' largely happens off the page in *Waverley*, its effects on individuals, communities, and the environment are evidenced throughout the novel: in the 'desolation' that Edward feels upon hearing the news of Culloden; in the damage done to Tully-Veolan, the Lowland estate of the Baron Bradwardine; in the torture and execution of Fergus; and in the arms that Edward had taken up against his own government and which, at the end of the novel, accompany the portrait of himself and Fergus that adorns a Tully-Veolan rebuilt with English money. *Waverley's* follow-up, *Guy Mannering*, is even more explicit in its allusions to the Clearances and its associations of Scotland with British-ruled India and with empire more generally. But such associations with Scotland and racial otherness are subtly worked into *Waverley*, too. In a scene that both confirms the criticism that Hechter sees Scotland as one large internal colony and that also suggests the intra-national racism that Hechter points to when he quotes Charles Kingsley's remark comparing the Irish to chimpanzees, Scott writes that so strange was the sight of Highland warriors descending from the mountains to do battle that it 'conjured to the south country Lowlanders as much surprise as if an invasion of African negroes, or Esquimaux Indians, had issued forth from the northern mountains of their own native country'.[13]

As several contributors to our symposium suggest, the evidence for internal colonialism within Britain is less clearly visible in the numbers, graphs, and

10. Walter Scott, *Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since*, Claire Lamont (ed.) (Oxford, 1986), 340.
11. Walter Scott, *The Antiquary*, Nicola J. Watson (ed.) (Oxford, 2002), 3.
12. Scott, *Waverley*, 340.
13. Ibid., 229. Hechter quotes Kingsley's on the Irish at Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, xvi–xvii.

maps than it is, perhaps, in the pages of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels. In that, Murray Pittock is right to single out Hechter's account of uneven development as the book's major achievement. This concern has been something of a growth area in literary studies, with an emerging concern with how both the economic infrastructure has shaped literary production in the provinces and colonies of imperial state systems. Thus, Pascale Casanova can propose a history of literary capitals, whereby the cultural gravity pulls writers and critics to particular locales at particular moments in time.[14]

If Casanova is focused on the core of any world system of literary production, scholarly attention has also fallen on what Share Dekard et al have described as 'the European Literary Periphery', as much as on the productions emanating from the colonial literary public spheres.[15] From this European perspective Britain itself can seem somewhat peripheral, operating at a meso-level even as it acted, for much of the period under interrogation, as the hub of an Anglophone imperium. In this context, it is worth recalling that the original appearance of Hechter's volume came in the immediate context of the 1975 referendum on entry into the EEC, one that worked to situate the UK as a regional partner in a wider political formation.[16] Thus, Katy Hayward examines how EU regulation, post-1975, addressed the core-periphery unevenness highlighted in Hecter's account in ways that the English core could not.

This is to remind ourselves that the focus of Hechter's work was not on literary criticism but on developmental sociology with structural inequality not with cultural formation or ideological commitments. As Pittock suggests, the account can seem to be better fitted for understanding 'internal inequities in the core state' – that is, regional differences within England itself – than for understanding the Celtic fringe in colonial terms. Paradoxically the referendum on EEC membership foregrounded the problem of regional power and hence pushed devolution to the front of the political agenda, culminating in the 1979 Scottish referendum. Hechter's book ultimately sits inside that moment of constitutional tension.

And just as the vote to join the European project provides one context for Hechter's study, so the vote to leave that enterprise has highlighted the persistence of such regional variation and its capacity to influence political commitments, and reframes an ongoing dialogue with Hechter's text, evinced here in the responses of Keating and Hayward. The uneven nature of development was again foregrounded in what has been usefully termed the 'Brexit geographies'

14. Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge MA, 2004).

15. Sharae Deckard, Nicholas Lawrence, Neil Lazarus, Graeme Macdonald. Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, Benita Parry and Stephen Shapiro, 'The European Literary Periphery' in idem, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool, 2019).

16. On this event see Robert Saunders, *Yes to Europe: The 1975 Referendum and Seventies Britain* (Cambridge, 2018).

of the 2016 vote.[17] As common wisdom now has it, it was not the Irish, nor was it the Scots, who chose to leave. It was, with decisive force, the English.[18] If Northern Ireland voted by 56% to 44% to remain; the Scots trumped this with 62% wishing to stay within the fold. Localities in both cases bucked the national trend. 51.4% in Belfast East for instance voted to leave; in Scotland even as all the major electoral districts voted to remain, Banff and Buchan chose by 61% to leave. In Northern Ireland, almost 350,000 votes to leave were accumulated; in Scotland that tally was over one million. No society in the United Kingdom was united in its direction of travel.

But it remains the case that it was England's voice that was decisive. 15,188,000 votes looked to leave, with 13,247,674 seeking to stay.[19] The views of the other two Kingdoms could not sway the English majority voice and their Welsh co-agitators, who partnered with them to the tune of an additional 854,572 votes to go (a leave majority of 82,000).[20] As Anthony Barnett has rightly identified, one of the central elements in the Brexit story is the fashion in which England has fallen out of love with the British project, even as that rage was displaced onto a distant European bureaucracy by the media who were complicit with the provocations of the governing elite.[21] Indeed, two studies conducted in the run up to Brexit identified an upsurge in the number of English respondents who, when asked about their political identity, prioritised their Englishness over their Britishness (40% to 16%).[22]

What might this set of results indicate about the political culture of these dissenting regions? Certainly, London had specific reasons for its commitment to the European Union, notably the health and wellbeing of the financial sector. A 2017 study calculated that 'the estimated tax contribution of the Financial Services sector in 2016 is £71.4bn (2015 £66.5bn). The contribution is 11.5% of total UK Government tax receipts.'[23] Another study asserted that 'London alone is home to 15 per cent of the UK population and accounted for 28 per cent of the population living in cities.' It generated 'a GDP of over £565 billion, which is about 17

17. Mark Boyle, Ronan Paddison and Peter Shirlow, 'Introducing "Brexit Geographies" Five Provocations', *Space and Polity*, 22 (2018), 97–110.

18. Alisia Henderson, Charlie Jeffery, Dan Wincott and Richard Wyn Jones, 'How Brexit was Made in England', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 19 (2017), 631–46.

19. The divisions within England are addressed in Will Jennings and Ben Stoker, 'Bifurcation of Politics: Two Englands', *Political Quarterly*, 87 (2016), 372–82.

20. One study suggests that this majority was itself determined by the presence of an English population voting Leave within its borders: 'English People living in Wales Titled it towards Brexit, Research Finds', *The Guardian*, 22 September 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/sep/22/english-people-wales-brexit-research [accessed 12.03.26].

21. Anthony Barnett, *The Lure of Greatness* (Unbound, 2017).

22. Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), *The Dog that Finally Barked* (2011); see also IPPR, *England and its Two Unions* (2013).

23. City of London, Corporate Research Report, Total Tax Contribution of UK Financial Services, ninth edition, 2017.

percent of the UK's total GDP.'[24] One can argue that London has long acted as a kind of city state, independent of the drives and needs of its English hinterland, which supplies some but no means all of its population requirements.[25]

Scotland was enmeshed in the EU project for similar reasons. Thus, far from reading the European Union vote as a victory for nationalism over English rule, it may be apt to read the vote in the light of the vote on Scottish independence, which took place on 18 September 2014. This confirmed the continued desire of the Scottish populace to be party to the Great British project, by a margin of 55.3% to 44.7%.[26] So too, Edinburgh and Aberdeen voted to stay at rates around 60% while the industrial cities of Glasgow and Dundee both voted for independence at rates of 53.5% and 57.3% respectively. If you include Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire, which voted to leave at a rate of 51.1% and 54% as part of the greater Glasgow conurbation, then the totality of the regions in which independence were favoured are part of a post-industrial world, not the British project of internal and imperial government. Add to this how recently the Scottish National Party converted to pro-Europeanism. They campaigned against membership in 1975 (when Scotland voted 58.4% in favour of staying in) and did not alter their position until the single European Act of 1987.[27]

Irish nationalism similarly has had a chequered history of supporting the European project. Sinn Fein was for a long time anti-European, seeing the project of integration as a threat to Irish sovereignty. Yet in January 2015 it took the tactical decision to campaign for the UK to remain a member, arguing that Brexit would exacerbate divisions on the island of Ireland. Certainly, it exacerbated divisions in the Ulster Unionist community with the DUP arguing to leave, and the UUP asserting a desire to remain. In the event, Ulster as a whole voted to stay, confirming a broad commitment to the British political project of internationalism.

Other regions have another history; one in which the key shift took place in the nineteenth century and relates to how the regions were shaped and moulded by industrialisation and the recent experience of economic decline, rather than in their incorporation into a British state system. This is the case in the broad swathe of land that makes up the north of England and northern Wales – and arguably extends into Ulster. These are the regions that provided the locus of

24. Cities Outlook Report (2016), 27, https://www.uncsbrp.org/economicdevelopment.htm [accessed 17.03.17].

25. For a polemical study in this vein see Sam Bright, *Fortress London: Why We Need to Save the Country from its Capital* (London, 2022).

26. See also Colin Kidd, *Union and Unionisms: Political Thought in Scotland, 1600–2000* (Cambridge, 2008).

27. Valarie Tarditi, 'The Scottish National Party's Changing Attitude towards the European Union', Sussex European Institute. https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=epern-working-paper-22.pdf&site=266 [accessed 27.03.17].

the imperial powerhouse: benefitting from the triangular trade and industrial innovation while being subject to class divisions and industrial strife. While the 1960s metanarratives of the 'world turned upside down' and the 'making of the English working class' have given way – following the collapse of the USSR and the reconfiguration of left-wing politics – to ethnic and gendered group identities, these regions have remained distinctive in their valorisation of heavy industrial enterprise.[28] And the north-south divide remains a volatile fault line in the politics of England; one recently mapped by Tom Hazeldine.[29]

In this light, Hechter's concern with uneven development can cast a strong interpretive light on the current fragmentation of British politics. But caution needs to be taken as economic development and national identity are consistently subject to negotiation, as the contending cases of English Scottish and Irish nationalisms relations with Europeanism show. Structure and ideology do not reflect each other, rather they refract; distorting and redirecting their repective energies. Hechter's own trajectory is as case in point. While Internal Colonialism has inspired numerous scholars concerned with the mosaic of identities on the British and Irish islands, his own subsequent work on nationalism did not point towards support of a nascent independence movement. Rather, as his study *Containing Nationalism* (2000) made plain, he fretted that 'Although nationalism often inspires artistic, intellectual and political ferment, it is sometimes implicated in civil war and the most egregious acts of violence. At its worst violence inspires xenophobia, ethnic cleansing and genocide.'[30] If this is so, it is conceptually important that Hechter also contends that the British state was a consequence, not of Irish and Scottish peripheral nationalisms but of an English form of state building nationalism, whereby 'beginning in the sixteenth century and continuing into the twentieth, the rulers of England … attempted, fitfully perhaps, and with more or less success-to foster homogeneity in their realms by inducing culturally distinctive populations in each country's Celtic regions to assimilate to their own culture.'[31] To the extent that these endeavours were fitful and unsuccessful, it might be supposed that the British state was a form of regional empire, and to the extent that the efforts succeeded, a British nation was constructed. Or as Krishan Kumar has argued, it is important that 'we consider the English state as primarily an imperial state and the English people as an imperial people.'[32] That tension is captured in Hechter's terminology of 'internal colonialism'. Irish,

28. Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (1972; London, 1991); E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963 revised 1968; London, 1991).

29. Tom Hazeldine, *The Northern Question: A History of a Divided Country* (London, 2021).

30. Michael Hechter, *Containing Nationalism* (Oxford, 2000), 134.

31. Ibid., 15.

32. Krishan Kumar, *The Idea of Englishness: English Culture, National Identity and Social Thought* (London, 2015), 36.

Scottish and Welsh nationalisms fell under the rubric of peripheral nationalisms, generated by local elite resistance to the intrusion of a neighbouring state.

This takes us back to the question of Hechter's blindness to broader imperial developments. He has sought to demarcate imperialism from nationalism, by suggesting that the former 'occurs when central rules expand their control into areas occupied by one or more distinct cultural groups, but then make no subsequent attempt to meld the resulting mix into a single cultural entity. Imperial', he propounds, 'is not a type of nationalism because empires are purposively multinational.'[33] Yet this lacuna has been accentuated by recent scholarship, which has identified the extent and depth of Irish and Scottish involvement in the institutions of British imperial power. Andrew Mackillop, for instance, has identified a disproportionate presence of the Celtic peoples in the eighteenth-century East India Company and work is now being done to uncover the complex interactions between Ireland's and Scotland's merchant classes and the Atlantic slave trade.[34] Contributors to this roundtable, notably Allan Macinnes and James Stafford, make similar critiques regarding the lack of an imperial context in explaining internal colonialism.

This, however, is to beg the question, for as the roundtable evidences, the term of art has itself been productive. Unlike, for instance, J. G. A. Pocock's contemporaneous conceit of a New British History, the formulation of 'internal colonialism' has the benefit of alluding to the reality of an external British empire, however ambiguous that was in its multifarious forms of governance and claims to legitimate coercion.[35] And unlike Benedict Anderson's subsequent and highly influential trope of 'imagined communities' Hechter's work permitted both a means to explore high literary cultural production and to account for the varied and the uneven nature of development inside emergent and established nation states. It is little wonder that scholars still consider *Internal Colonialism* to be an important interlocutor, fifty years after its first appearance.

33. Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*, 8–9.

34. Andrew Mackillop, *Human Capital and Empire: Scotland, Ireland, Wales and British Imperialism in Asia, c.1690–c.1820* (Manchester, 2021); Finola O'Kane and Ciaran O'Neill (eds), *Ireland, Slavery and the Caribbean: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Manchester, 2023).

35. Andrew Diley and Jon Wilson, 'The Incoherence of Empire, or the Pitfalls of Ignoring Sovereignty in the History of the British Empire', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 1 (2023), 191–217.

Structural-functionalism versus Ideology in Early Modern Ireland

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It is as inescapable as it is inappropriate that my observations on *Internal Colonialism* should begin with personal reminiscence. When the book first came to my notice in the mid-1970s, I was an early postgraduate brimming with the innocent arrogance that often characterises the type, chafing against the perceived theoretical ignorance of his elders that had restricted them to the rigid, positivist methodology of merely recovering and stating the evidence.

In my quest for conceptual enlightenment, I had already discovered several alluring prospects among which Immanuel Wallerstein's *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (1974) and Perry Anderson's *Lineages of the Absolute State* (1974) featured prominently. Though wonderfully stimulating on a grand scale, in a manner that might have pleased the later undergraduate, they were, even for this hungry intellect, unsatisfying. Ireland received no sustained attention in either and featured only in passing in these grand models. And when it did, the manner of treatment was far from reassuring. For Ireland, Wallerstein appeared to rely on Rowse's dated *Expansion of Elizabethan England* (1955) and on one authoritative but specialised journal article.[36] While Anderson (son of an Irishman!) did indeed supply some paragraphs to the island, he could still content himself with the following summary:

> Elizabethan expansionism, incapable of frontal advance against the leading monarchies of the mainland, threw its largest armies against the poor and primitive clan society of Ireland. This Celtic Island had remained the most archaic social formation in the West down to the end of the sixteenth century, perhaps in the whole continent.[37]

It was in this disappointed state that I encountered *Internal Colonialism*. It came not like one, but like several breaths of fresh air. It shared many of the

36. Though D. B. Quinn's seminal essay 'Ireland and Sixteenth Century European Expansion' is included in his bibliography, it is not cited and Wallerstein shows little sign of having absorbed its subtleties. The article is Eileen Mc Cracken, 'The Woodlands of Ireland circa 1600', *Irish Historical Studies*, 11 (1959), 271–96.

37. Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolute State* (London, 1974), 130.

conceptual tools employed by Wallerstein and Anderson – Wallerstein's core-periphery theory and Anderson's concentration on the centralising state. Unlike the composers of grand *schema,* however, Hechter's focus was on what would soon be denominated with appropriate tact, as 'the Atlantic archipelago'[38] and specifically with the impact that the development of the state in England had on the regions he somewhat unfortunately identified as 'the Celtic fringe', and so the course of Irish history alongside that of Scotland and Wales was a continuing theme throughout the book, not simply a resource of examples to be adduced as seemed useful. Hechter addressed directly, moreover, as a central historical phenomenon, what the grand theorists largely underplayed: that is the culture and ideology of nationalism.

Hechter's address to nationalism was not entirely sympathetic. Nationalism was an essentially reactionary force, emerging no earlier than the late eighteenth century as an inevitable response to the unequal 'division of labour' that had excluded peripheries from industrialism and condemned them to economic subordination and underdevelopment. Thereafter, its objectives and (mostly) its effects had been largely beneficial in enabling the marginalised to preserve and consolidate their separate identity.

There was, moreover, an element of structural-functionalism in Hechter's analysis of the development of nationalism in Ireland which offered an alternative to ideologically infused accounts:[39]

> The ultimate success of Irish, as against Welsh and Scottish, nationalism can best be explained by differences in the social structural composition of these regions. The significant differentiating factor is not the great poverty of Ireland relative to England, because Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland were likewise materially disadvantaged. However, the functional role played by Ireland in the course of British industrialization differed from that of Wales and Scotland. In the mid-nineteenth century all of the Celtic territories underwent economic transformation. Following the famine, the Irish economy shifted in response to changing English demand from the production of grain to the production of beef cattle. But in Wales, Scotland, and—significantly—Northern Ireland—industrial enclaves arose with the development of heavy industry … whereas both Wales and Scotland were, at least politically, significantly divided along

38. Among historians, at any rate, the term may be accredited to J. G. A. Pocock in 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject', *Journal of Modern History*, 47 (1975), 601–21: 'We should start with what I have called the Atlantic archipelago – since the term "British Isles" is one which Irishmen reject and Englishmen decline to take quite seriously'.

39. Hechter has frequently acknowledged his debt to Talcott Parsons. See his contribution to Lawrence A. Young (ed.) *Rational Choice Theory and Religion* (New York, 1997).

> enclave-hinterland lines … For the most part, the industrial enclaves were relatively cosmopolitan and anglicized. Thus these regions proceeded to become split into two separate cultural zones. This cultural differentiation between enclave and hinterland territories interfered with the development of a single regional political identity in Wales and Scotland. Ireland, however, had a comparatively small enclave, since her particular adaptation to the English market was to provide agricultural primary products. Thus territorial political differences could not split the nationalist movement in Ireland as happened in both Wales and Scotland.[40]

Such an interpretation of the character of Irish nationalism and such a recent genealogy would later be challenged by the alternative perspectives of A. D. Smith and Adrian Hastings, and in an Irish context by Brendan Bradshaw.[41] But in the 1970s, Hechter's freedom from ideological determinism, coupled with the compelling manner in which he built his multi-layered and time-sensitive account of developments across the archipelago, made his work seem a liberation from the stifling effects of state-approved nationalist historiography.[42]

Independently, my own interest in functionalist analysis, (which in historians' hands is regularly transmuted into dysfunctionalist analysis), was in part prompted by my unhappiness with recent attempts to supply accounts of the origins and pace of the Tudor conquest of Ireland in terms of major shifts in prevailing ideologies such as the racist implications of Spanish colonial anthropology, or the exclusivist implications of Calvinist ontology. The amorphousness of such generalised concepts, along with the quite inconclusive nature of the evidence produced to demonstrate their influence over Tudor perceptions of Ireland, led me to seek a less abstract and more interpretatively coherent means of explaining the drift toward increasing confrontation that characterised Irish history in the later sixteenth century. And the kind of analysis performed by Hechter seemed to offer an exemplary alternative.

Despite his starting date, Hechter himself had little enough to say directly about sixteenth-century Ireland; and what he did say was hardly more encouraging than Anderson or Wallerstein:

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40. Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (London, 1975), 270–1.

41. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986); idem *National identity* (London, 1990); Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge,1997); Brendan Bradshaw, *'And so began the Irish Nation': Nationality, National Consciousness and Nationalism in Pre-Modern Ireland* (London, 2015).

42. His book was, for example, enthusiastically reviewed by Ruth Dudley Edwards, whose biography of P. H. Pearse, published in January 1977, was to establish her as a leading light among Ireland's historical revisionists.

> Henry claimed the kingship of Ireland, imposed the Reformation, and began a system of government asserting royal supremacy, which was mediated by English deputies. However, recognizing the Crown's weakness in Ireland, Henry attempted to bring both the Anglo-Norman Lords (termed the Old English, and the structural equivalent of the Welsh Marcher Lords), and the native Irish chieftains under his authority by extending to them unlimited autonomy, in return for their pledge of fealty to the Crown. This policy was called 'surrender and regrant,' and it provided Henry with but hollow authority. However, Tudor policy was probably designed for the safety of England rather than the exploitation of Ireland.[43]

Even at the time they were written, every one of these sentences was open to challenge. But given the invigorating and liberating effect of his general account of Irish history, Hechter's lamentable ignorance of the details of its sixteenth-century phase was perhaps excusable.

But my excitement soon waned, as my interest in those details grew. First, it became clear to me that the summary of events contained in Hechter's first sentence quoted above was not only inadequate, it revealed a profound misunderstanding of what had actually taken place. Henry VIII did not 'impose the Reformation' nor did he 'claim the kingship of Ireland'. Both were decisions enacted freely by the Irish parliament in Dublin. Both were part of what has been described as 'an Irish constitutional revolution' intended to end the old ethnic distinctions between the Gaelic Irish and the descendants of the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman invaders. 'Surrender and regrant' was more than 'hollow', or something 'designed for the safety of England'. It was an intensive campaign that persisted throughout the century and that intended to make the integrationist promise of the kingship statute a reality, and on the island of Ireland itself, fully to absorb 'the Celtic fringe'.[44]

Thus, Hechter's summary was more than inaccurate, it wholly discounted a major event in Irish history that, had its objectives been realised, was as momentous as any of the other major developments emphasised by Hechter: industrialisation, centralisation, nationalism, and famine in Ireland. Arguably indeed, it was more. For, if the sixteenth-century revolution had actually been completed

43. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 102.

44. The pioneer of these conclusive revisions to the nationalist narrative was Brendan Bradshaw, see in particular his *The Irish Constitutional Revolution of the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1979); but the essential thrust of his re-interpretations was already made clear in his contribution to Brian Farrell (ed.), *The Irish Parliamentary Tradition* (Dublin, 1973) and his 'The Opposition to the Ecclesiastical Legislation in the Irish Reformation Parliament', *Irish Historical Studies*, 16 (1969), 285–303.

it would have created a form of dual monarchy within which ethnic difference and economic diversity would have had less of the profound effects described in *Internal Colonialism*.

Hechter gave little attention to the constitutional framework of the kingdom of Ireland, except at the point of its extinction. He did not refer to its foundation in 1541, and, in a rather confused passage, appeared to identify the Irish parliament with the policy of plantation.[45] Hechter might well have defended such neglect by observing that, whatever its aspirations, the kingdom of Ireland had never materialised as a practical constitutional and political entity. But, following his own exemplary analytic practice, he might also have asked why this was so.

In this, structural functionalism might well have come to his aid. For there were several satisfyingly complicated features within the framework of this dual monarchy that could be pointed to as inherently fragile. The successive and varied weaknesses of the individual monarchs,[46] the internal weaknesses and external challenges afflicting royal administration in Ireland,[47] competition and tensions both between and within native social groupings and newly-arrived settler interests[48] collectively supplied adequate grounds for explaining the failure of the experiment.

Yet (and this is a frequent flaw in the structural-functionalist critique) many of the participants in this process of state building were aware of the nature of the challenges facing them and struggled to provide means of overcoming them. Indeed, the history of successive 'English deputies' is a record of their variously conceived strategies to do precisely that. Their failure was more than merely a matter of limited personal ability or administrative capacity – though such factors doubtless played a part. It lay deeper, buried in the implicit assumption that an Irish kingdom, when fully completed, would be a replica of the current *Republica Anglorum*.[49] Repeated experiences of disappointment, disruption and defeat in the middle decades of the sixteenth century steadily gave rise to an ever deepening questioning of those assumptions on the part of those actively

45. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 68 and 72.

46. After 1547, the Tudor dynasty underwent a series of succession uncertainties that limited its capacity to act as genuine monarchs of Ireland; though the two early Stuart monarchs showed greater interest, they were too distracted by other problems to pay sustained attention to their Irish role.

47. For a survey see Ciaran Brady, 'Court, Castle and Country: The Framework of Government in Tudor Ireland' in Ciaran Brady and Raymond Gillespie (eds) *Natives and Newcomers: Essays on the Making of Irish Colonial Society* (Dublin, 1986), 22–49.

48. For a useful summary Nicholas Canny, *From Reformation to Restoration: Ireland, 1534 – 1660* (Dublin, 1987).

49. My reference here is to the standard thinking on the character of the English polity as adumbrated in Sir Thomas Smith's *De Republica Anglorum*. Smith himself displayed this unquestioned assumption in practice and in microcosm in his ill-fated colonial project in the Ards. See Hiram Morgan, 'The Colonial Venture of Sir Thomas Smith in Ulster, 1571–1575', *Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), 261–78.

engaged in the project until it issued in the shocking realisation that, should it ever be attained, an Irish kingdom would be both in political and ecclesiastical terms significantly different from the English one.

Politically, it became clear that the peaceful integration of the Irish social hierarchy would require adjustment both in terms of taxation and representation that would approximate the form of absolutism emerging in Western Europe. Ecclesiastically, the shape that an Hibernican church might take would look very different in its liturgical and administrative practices to the Church of England. These were implications that divided and paralysed English thinking about Ireland. Some – mostly, but not exclusively, the viceroys – implicitly accepted that the Irish kingdom would be different both in its constitutional and fiscal arrangements. But others, especially but not exclusively Spenser, rejecting this appalling vista, insisted that Ireland could be made English only by total conquest.

What was powerfully at work here was *ideology*. Not the superficial notion of ideology as a justification for policy adopted by some Irish historians, and discounted by Hechter.[50] But ideology as an imprisoning inheritance, barely perceived and all the more powerful for that. This was a grasp of the context displayed by Gramsci – an earlier theorist of internal colonialism unacknowledged by Hechter – and by Max Weber (before he was Americanised by Talcott Parsons). And its relevance in explaining the drift toward conquest in Ireland is no less relevant than the structural features so boldly foregrounded by Hechter.

In its subordination of the role of ideology, *Internal Colonialism* was a book of its time, echoing the kind of perspectives made fashionable by the *Annales* school. And that time has passed. But its present recollection still evokes something of the excitement and admiration experienced by that naïve postgraduate.

50. See, for example, Hechter's treatment of racism, which he embeds within a structural-functionalist framework – with an emphasis on institutionalised racism. See Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 17–18, 130, 133.

Hechter: Policy without Process

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First published in 1975, Michael Hechter brings a sociologist's approach to the place of the Celtic fringe in British national development between 1536 and 1966. Effectively this period covers the beginnings of English-led state formation through forcible subordination of Wales and Ireland and concludes with the final phase of British disengagement from global colonialism. His analysis of the relationship between England as the national core and its peripheries on the Celtic fringe – expanded peaceably to incorporate Scotland in the early eighteenth century – has two principle strengths. His interdisciplinary approach is non-Anglocentric and he connects domestic and colonial developments. His core message in modelling the relationship of core and periphery in what ultimately became an industrial setting is to reject the diffusionist approach that suggests intergroup contact leads to ethnic homogenisation. Instead, he promotes an internal colonial model, which attests that contact over four centuries between an expanding British core and a declining Celtic periphery may have heightened ethnic conflict. However, throughout the book there is limited engagement with policy and process to substantiate internal colonialism. Dealing mainly with the Scottish Highlands, three areas do not sustain his internal colonial model: ethnic solidarity; the removal and relocation of people through Clearances; and overseas adventuring in America, Africa and Asia. His major omission is any meaningful consideration of religion.

The eleventh to the fifteenth centuries witnessed the emergence of the clans in the Scottish Highlands. Clanship, a potent mixture of feudalism, kinship and local association, had no monolithic ethnic roots. As well as the Gaels, the clans also included British and Pictish peoples from Celtic Scotland. Clans also included distinctly Norse, Anglo-Norman and Anglian peoples who migrated and settled in the Scottish Highlands. The one unifying feature in the middle ages was language – Gaelic prevailed in discourse within the Highlands. However, the clans, like other families in Scotland, were divided on major political issues such as the Wars of Independence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the arrival of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the Wars for the Three Kingdoms in the seventeenth century and Jacobitism, whose risings and plots stretched from 1689 to 1753. There was no clear ethnic position in support of, or against, these upheavals. Nor with the exception of the Wars of Independence can these upheavals be attributed to English aggression. In the aftermath of the battle of Culloden in April 1746, which ended the last major Jacobite rising and confirmed Scotland's place

in the Anglo-Scottish Union enacted in 1707, predominantly English forces under the command of the vengeful William, duke of Cumberland, went on the rampage throughout the Scottish Highlands. They primarily targeted indigenous Gael speakers, not just Jacobites. This can be viewed as a forerunner to the atrocities in the Balkans in the late twentieth century or the indiscriminate carnage inflicted on Palestine by the Israeli Defence Force. However, perpetrators of atrocities in the wake of Culloden included not only Lowland Scots but also clans opposed to Jacobitism. Hechter touches on the political significance of Jacobitism with an engraving on the battle of Culloden but misses the ethnic complexity of reprisals.

Although often associated with reprisals after Culloden, the removal and relocation of people from the Scottish Highlands actually commenced in the 1680s and can be attributed primarily to the profitability of droving black cattle to growing industrial towns in England. By the later seventeenth century, droving was the major growth point in the Scottish economy and it was dominated by the Highland clans, whose economic role was far from peripheral. As well as expansive industrialisation, the increased demand for salt beef for the royal navy ensured that droving remained a vital element of the Scottish economy, with Highland dominance in the trade lasting well into the nineteenth century. However, the profits of droving were too often squandered by clan chiefs and gentry to support their social aspirations within Scottish landed society and their growing absenteeism from their estates. Continuing rent rises borne by the tenantry led, from the 1730s, to increasingly changing tenurial conditions that replaced multiple-tenanted, communal farms with large enclosed single-tenant farms. Labourers and servants either relocated into crofting communities no longer sustained by agriculture or were removed entirely from their traditional townships. However, removals were checked by the continuous need for manpower during the Jacobite era and thereafter by the use of crofts as reservoirs for military recruitment, notably for colonial service overseas. Such recruitment was controlled by chiefs and clan gentry, not coerced by British governments.

The first phase of Highland Clearances, which lasted from the 1730s to the 1820s, was marked by the creation of single-tenant farms, initially for raising Highland cattle and subsequently for sheep rearing that favoured Lowland breeds with greater carcass weight and more extensive fleeces. In this context, the single-tenant farm responded to the growth of urbanisation and industrialisation based on textiles throughout the rest of Britain. Simultaneously, crofting communities were created to absorb labour displaced from traditional communal townships. The displaced were redeployed to burn kelp (seaweed) to aid the colouring and dyeing processes in textile manufacture, or in inshore fishing, or in extractive industries such as quarrying for slate and lime. But the Clearances in this first phase cannot be held creditably to the internal colonial model as defined by Hechter. In the first instance, the Clearances were not inspired far less driven by English or Lowland

Scottish interests. They were instigated and sustained in the main by indigenous clan chiefs and gentry, who were also primarily responsible for the introduction of Lowland sheep-farmers and estate factors. Crofting, though it was pervasive in the Scottish Highlands, only predominated to the north and west of the Great Glen, bisected by the Caledonian Canal since the 1820s. Most importantly, the Lowlands as well as the Highlands were subjected by indigenous landowners to widespread Clearances, to complement the first phase of Scottish industrialisation from the 1770s to the 1820s that was marked by the rise of factories for chemicals as well as textiles. Although no major chemical works were established in the Highlands, a prominent chemical engineer who migrated from the Highlands to the West of Scotland in 1777 was George Mackintosh. With his son Charles, the inventor of waterproofing, they produced high quality colour fixatives and dyes.

An essential bridge between agriculture and industry was the planned village, a form of settlement that was not just a feature in transforming the Lowlands but was clearly in evidence in the Highlands to the south and east of the Great Glen. Although less markedly industrial than those created to serve factories in the Lowlands, planned villages were created by clan chiefs and gentry, sometimes in tandem with Lowland entrepreneurs, to pursue, textiles, deep-sea fishing, boat building, quarrying and distilling.

The second phase of Highland Clearances from the 1820s was marked by the extension of sheep-farms and the creation of sporting estates at the expense of crofting communities. They did receive a measure of legal protection by the Crofting Holdings Act of 1886 that offered security of tenure but not of income. This phase ran concurrently with a second phase of industrialisation that continued into the twentieth century and was marked by the extensive production of iron, coal and steel, by the prolific building of sail and steam ships, and by the phenomenal growth and distribution of railways. Other than the spread of railways, the second phase of industrialisation had a less direct impact than the first phase in the Highlands. Nevertheless, economic growth was achieved by slate quarrying, distilling, textiles, fishing and also by the introduction of tourism by railway and steamship. Organised labour in the cities as well as the burgeoning middle classes facilitated increased leisure time for travel and vacations in the Highlands. From the ranks of organised labour, Hechter picks out John Maclean as an outstanding orator on Clydeside in the early twentieth century without attesting to his origins in a Gaelic-speaking community on the Isle of Mull.[51]

Although the land-market from the nineteenth century did open up to Lowland and English interests, especially industrialists seeking recreational outlets, indigenous Highland landowners were replenished by capital repatriated from imperial adventuring. Albeit not as numerous, Highlanders, like Lowlanders,

51. Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (London, 1975),183.

were to the fore among tobacco lords, sugar barons, African slavers, Indian nabobs, and Chinese tea-traders. The Empire was a pillar of landed enterprise not just through direct adventuring but also through indirect engagement by the acquisition, transfer and sale of stocks and shares in freelance and company ventures. Yet the role of the Highlands, as of Wales, in colonial development and administration has been underplayed by Hechter through his reliance on sociological modelling backed up by statistical analyses drawn overwhelmingly from official sources.[52] Sir John Macpherson from a staunch Jacobite family in Badenoch that had relocated to Skye was appointed as the supreme governor of the English East India Company in 1784. From his base in Calcutta, he progressed to acting Governor-General of the British Raj. The immediate impact of Macpherson's governorship was the accelerated repatriation of capital of around £1.3 million annually to the Highlands as well as to the Lowlands of Scotland.

Differing patterns of development in agriculture and industry from the sixteenth to the twentieth centur give no more than superficial credence to Hechter's analysis, which sees the Lowlands as a beneficiary of the British Empire and the Highlands as another internal colony on the Celtic fringe. In both the Highlands and the Lowlands, ties of kinship and local association became the basis for commercial and colonial networking that transcended geographical and cultural frontiers as well as political and religious barriers in pursuit of profit and place as new horizons opened up for Scottish adventurers, particularly in the aftermath of the Union of 1707.

Hechter is notably weak on the divisive issues of religion in the Highlands and in Lowland Scotland, which cut across ethnic ties on the Celtic fringe as well as in the English core. In the Jacobite era, Highlanders were predominantly Episcopalian, supported by Roman Catholics. They were opposed by Presbyterians and Seceders throughout Scotland as well as Anglicans and Dissenters in England, Wales and Ireland. From the nineteenth into the twentieth century, Highland and Lowland Scotland were further divided by the rise of the Free Church, the Free Presbyterians and the United Free Kirks. These divisions greatly affected the provision of schooling and social welfare and led to legislative interventions by central government, not to impose colonial solutions but to uphold community over class interests.

Hechter, as a social scientist, certainly brings a differing perspective to historical change. But his case is severely weakened by his reliance on secondary historical sources. He makes no serious use of primary historical sources; published sources are barely touched, and archival sources are notable by their omission. Apart from arousing passing interest from historians of ideas, Hechter has done little to encourage historians in general to adopt inter-disciplinary approaches.

52. Ibid., 256.

Re-reading *Internal Colonialism*: A Self-Dialogue

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At the time of publication in 1975, Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* shone an important light on the separate national identities within the supposedly United Kingdom as well as the historic hegemony of the English state. With its multiple foci on the economics, politics, history and culture of the geopolitical margins of Britain (Ireland, Scotland and Wales), the work has had a profound influence on a number of fields over the last fifty years.

It has also had a significant impact on my personal intellectual trajectory. I first encountered it when I was a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, about ten years after its initial publication by the University of California Press in 1975. I was trying to decide between two very different areas that I was interested in pursuing for my dissertation: literatures in English from the peripheries of the British Isles and African postcolonial literatures. Hechter's book helped me connect the two fields (and also convince my graduate committee that it was viable), and I went on to examine eighteenth-century Scottish literature and, later, Irish music and culture, through the lens of postcolonial theory for my first two books. My theoretical interests shifted, however, and, over the course of time, *Internal Colonialism* ceased to be one of those 'go-to' books that I kept close to my desk.

I was, honestly, a little wary about going back to consider Hechter's book after not having reached for it for possibly two decades. Perhaps I felt a little defensive, as one might about a favorite novel or movie that had meant a lot at one time. Nevertheless, re-reading it has actually generated some interesting realisations, apart from just personal nostalgia and mild amusement at the now odd-sounding term 'Celtic fringe' (with its hair-style associations), in particular reflections on the directions that research on Ireland, Scotland and Wales has taken after Hechter. I found I was reading the book from a split perspective: not just from my present critical position, but also remembering why I had found it so useful earlier. I also found myself wondering what I might say to my earlier self about the book if I could go back in time to that moment when I first encountered *Internal Colonialism*. What do I wish I had known then?

The time-travelling dialogue might go something like this:

Earlier me: I'm excited to find a work that brings the discourse on colonialism to bear on the history of the British Isles. I particularly like Hechter's observations about the features of the internal colonialism model of national development (as opposed to the diffusion model):

> there is crystallization of the unequal distribution of resources and power between the two groups. The superordinate group, or core, seeks to stabilize and monopolize its advantages through policies aiming at the institutionalization of the existing stratification system. It attempts to regulate the allocation of social roles such that those roles commonly defined as having high prestige are reserved for its members. Conversely, individuals from the less advanced group are denied access to these roles.[53]

I appreciate how Hechter works in the fields of sociology and economics but also connects these areas with the realm of culture as he indicates that individuals from both the core and peripheral group 'come to categorize themselves and others according to the range of roles each may be expected to play. They are aided in this categorization by the presence of visible signs, or cultural markers, which are seen to characterize both groups'.[54] These ideas of self-identification with specific groups according to 'cultural markers' resonate with what I've been reading by Frantz Fanon (*The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks*), Albert Memmi (*The Colonizer and the Colonized*), Abdul JanMohamed (*Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa*), Edward Said (*Orientalism)* and Antonio Gramsci (*Prison Notebooks*), although of course the issue of racial difference is fundamentally different in the case of what Hechter calls the 'Celtic' peoples.

Current me: Agreed. The premise of the book is ground-breaking, and its argument, to account for the persistence of nationalist movements in Ireland, Scotland and Wales over time and to explain 'the social origins of ethnic solidarity and change, on the basis of aggregated data' is ambitious.[55] In a retrospective on the book that he published in 1985 (which you won't see for a few years), Hechter suggested that his work 'demonstrates the greater salience of cultural affinities over material interests as a basis for the development of group solidarity.'[56] For literary scholars, that's an invitation to consider the role of lit-

53. Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development with a new Introduction and new Appendix by the Author* (London, 1999), 9.

54. Ibid., 9.

55. Ibid., 6.

56. Michael Hechter, 'Internal Colonialism Revisited' in Edward Tiryakian and Ronald Rogowski (eds), *New Nationalisms of the Developed West: Toward Explanation* (London, 1985), 17.

erature (and cultural activity in general) in both articulating and complicating political identities. But given Hechter's stated concerns, I'm wondering what you think about his application of the model of internal colonialism across the board to Ireland, Scotland and Wales?

Earlier me: Uh, right. I see what you mean. What I know already about the history of the three nations confirms that there are important differences between them. Since reading Marx and Engels on the 'Irish Question', as well the work of Robert Tracy and David Lloyd on Irish literature and colonialism, I can see how the 'internal colonialism' model fits in the Irish case (for the majority of the population). But not so well with Wales. And the case of Scotland is quite complex. In some ways, the internal colonialism model fits, and in other ways, the model doesn't fit at all.

Current me: Let's push that last point about Scotland bit further, seeing that I do have (ahem) some expertise in that subject. Do you see a difficulty in the book with the way that Scotland as a whole is sometimes represented as a card-carrying member of the 'Celtic lands' and sometimes just Gaelic or Highland Scotland qualifies for that role?[57] This produces some strange slippages, doesn't it? Hechter suggests the internal divisions in the Scottish case when he asserts there were 'three linguistic groups' in Scotland from the thirteenth century onward: 'English-speaking groups in the lowlands, Gaelic speakers in the Highlands and groups of Norwegian descent in the far north' (and here he seems to ignore the existence of Scots as a separate language).[58] But then he elides those differences with statements such as 'The sole Celtic land to have been politically united — having its own King, Church, and legal system — Scotland had curbed English designs by entering into an alliance with France'.[59]

Earlier me: So part of the problem is that Hechter is trying to impose an identity of 'ethnic solidarity' onto fundamentally diverse populations in order to make the larger argument of the book work?

Current me: I would say so. We can see other places in which Hechter imposes binary oppositions (England/'Celtic lands'; English state/Celtic peoples) onto complex situations. To draw on another example, this time one which mischaracterises the English side of the equation, too, the Darien episode is presented as a clash between the 'Scots', who had 'launched an expedition in 1695 to colonize

57. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 130.
58. Ibid., 78.
59. Ibid., 71.

Darien' and 'the English government' who 'responded with a fury'.[60] In fact, the Darien venture started out as a joint English/Scottish venture, with the Act for establishing the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies being given royal assent by King William in 1695 (including tax exemptions for a limited period). It was the East India Company, fearing competition, who 'scuttled this rather feeble enterprise' as they petitioned the House of Commons to shut down the Company, and they published a series of pamphlets designed to turn public opinion against it.[61] Their campaign worked. It was only after this point that the Company shifted its operations to Scotland where it did indeed become a focus of national interest. The original conflict, however, was not between England and a 'Celtic land', but between competing joint stock companies. I'm pointing this out not to poke random holes in Hechter's argument, but just to suggest that the 'internal colonial' model looks more complicated on the ground than it might seem in theory. There is definitely uneven development going on before, during and after the industrialising period in the British Isles involving political domination and 'material' exploitation.[62] But the process doesn't happen between a strictly English core and Celtic periphery; it's much more diffuse.

Earlier me: I suppose the case of the Darien expedition is also complicated because it suggests that at least a certain percentage of the Scottish population were also keen to develop their own colonial interests?

Current me: Absolutely. Even as Scotland was being constrained by Navigation Acts preventing it from trading abroad (an example of what Hechter would call England's attempts to 'stabilize and monopolize its advantages through policies'), some Scots also sought to extend their economic, political and religious reach through setting up a colony on the Darien peninsula where they expected their 'Ships through all the World' to 'go and come/Ev'n from the Rising to the Setting Sun' as well as 'Kind harmless Heathens' to 'adore' them as 'Demi-deitys'.[63] Sounds pretty colonial. On that note, you really might want to consider further the entanglement between internal and external colonialisms, something that Hechter doesn't really go into, apart from noting, for example, the impact of the transatlantic slave market on the economies of the Celtic nations. Irish exports, he writes, for example, were stimulated 'by the demand for salted beef and other provisions emanating from the sugar islands of the West Indies, as well as from the navies of the Western European maritime powers'.[64] It will be a

60. Ibid., 71.
61. Ibid., 71.
62. Ibid., 9.
63. Alexander Penecuik, *Caledonia Triumphans: A Panegyrick to the King* (Edinburgh, 1699).
64. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 84.

couple of decades still before the nations of what Hechter calls the 'Celtic fringe' examine their involvement in empire, including the transatlantic slave trade, more deeply. Hechter's model of these nations as victims of internal colonialism didn't help advance that particular area of research.

Earlier me: I suppose that must be the case.

Current me: It's certainly notable that the same kind of language of 'Error, Ignorance and Vice' is being applied to the 'remote Corners of the Highlands of Scotland' as to the 'Popish and Infidel Parts of the World' in the early writing of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge.[65] This kind of thinking will in turn feed into the articulation of Enlightenment stadial theory that placed commercial British civilisation at the foremost rung of civilisation. However, it also turns out that those who have been subjected to colonial harms in their country of origin can still carry colonial attitudes and practices into new contexts. In fact, you might want to take a look at your own country of origin, Canada, for examples of how Celtic peoples practiced their own form of settler colonialism in relation to Indigenous and other racialised peoples. But again, it will be a while until we get to that point in the Reconciliation process.

Earlier me: I see what you are saying. But for now, I'll still be using Hechter's book for my dissertation.

Current me: Go ahead. It is definitely a classic, and, in the present moment (I mean *my* present moment), Hechter's assertion that that 'cultural identity matters for political behavior' has particular resonance on both sides of the Atlantic.[66] And, by the way, good luck!

65. *A Short Account of the Rise, Progress and Present State of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge* (Edinburgh, 1748), 28–9.

66. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, xviii.

Internal Colonialism: A Fiftieth Birthday Retrospect

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Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* first appeared in 1975, and has been reprinted many times, with a second edition appearing in 1998. According to Google Scholar, it has been cited almost 5000 times, which is substantial, though for comparison Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, published several years later, has over thirty times as many citations.[67] The difference in scale can be explained to some extent by the fact Hechter's work is more specifically focused, and was received with greater indifference outwith the countries to which it refers: but it is and remains significant to the debate about nationalism outside England, and it was a pioneer in arguing that nationalism could be preserved and developed in an industrial society. Such a conclusion seems, of course, much less interesting now, in the aftermath of the dissolution of the invented state of Yugoslavia and the end of the USSR, but in the 1970s – and indeed in the 1980s – understanding of nationalist movements in these states was relatively poor. Hechter was also pioneering in his mixture of quantitative and qualitative assessments of the growth of nationalism: however, the objectivity these confer can be illusory in the light of more recent work, not least by Julian Hoppit in *The Dreadful Monster and its Poor Relations* (2021).

The great strength of Hechter's book is its notion of uneven development, which is the core 'Internal Colonialism' thesis, born out of a scholarly tradition dating back to discussions of the Russian Empire and the Italian provinces in the nineteenth century. It identifies the accumulation of resources by the core and the marginalisation of the periphery's economic development. That thesis has been strongly criticised when applied to (post)colonial readings of Scottish, Welsh or Irish nationalism, but today it looks, ironically, as if it applies more in England, where the north-east has less than half London's GDP per capita. Scotland is third among UK 'regions' after London and the south east, with Edinburgh recently overtaking London; the most deprived areas of the UK are now increasingly found south of the border, though those attributing this to devolution as a policy have to address the fact that Northern Ireland and Wales

67. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983).

are still in the bottom three. Wales has only 74% of UK GDP per capita, 10–20% behind the West Midlands and North West, the main two English regions that abut it.[68] Hechter notes that Wales and Scotland generally put their trust in the Labour Party in preference to political nationalism, and it is noteworthy that only Wales has enjoyed uninterrupted Labour-led governments during the devolutionary era.[69]

While Scotland lagged England badly in the 1960s, it has now caught up: but if devolution has made a difference in Edinburgh, that is much less clear in Cardiff. In 1921, Belfast was Dublin's richer brother, with the Irish Free State on less than 60% of UK GDP per capita: despite the presence of self-government for the majority of the period since in Belfast, it is Ireland that has outperformed to the extent of becoming one of the richest countries in the world per capita. In this context, the criticisms levelled at Hechter in the late twentieth century seem misplaced. As he puts it in the Introduction to the second edition, 'This claim that the absence of sovereignty had deleterious effects in the periphery was controversial. English reviewers gave little credence to the notion that the Celtic regions could be usefully compared to colonies'.[70] Controversial it may have been, entirely inaccurate is quite another matter.

However, if Hechter's core thesis of uneven development has been challenged, it remains the case that the differential between London/Edinburgh and the next most prosperous region is vast. London is 67% higher than the south-east in GDP per capita and Edinburgh-now 5% higher in per capita GDP than London- is over double the Scottish average. Comparing the 2024 OECD figures for the widespread high levels of prosperity in Germany or the economic success of many areas of the non-metropolitan areas of the United States shows the extent to which the UK and Scotland are economically skewed to the performance of the capital city. This doesn't exactly fit Hechter's model.[71]

Likewise infrastructure spend in the UK is massively disproportionate, with a huge gulf opening up by 2014 and not convincingly narrowed since.[72] Uneven

68. See 'Regional Economic Activity by Gross Domestic Product' (ONS). See also https://www.statista.com/statistics/1168072/uk-gdp-per-head-by-region/.

69. Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (London, 2017), xxix.

70. Ibid., xiv–xv.

71. Statista 2023: GDP per capita by region: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1168072/uk-gdp-per-head-by-region/?srsltid=AfmBOorM9iKLCu93YgUcesFx4qMzLSSYvLDlr-xGspX-eyshQ17LskLhe; OECD Regions and Cities at a Glance 2024. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/12/oecd-regions-and-cities-at-a-glance-2024_134d05a6/f42db3bf-en.pdf, pp. 18, 21, 23; Beth Franklin, 'Edinburgh Economy outperforms London for first time, new data reveals', STV News, 27 June 2025.

72. 'London gets 24 times as much spent on infrastructure per resident than north-east England', *The Guardian* 7 August 2014; 'England's north-south divide is deepening, says new report', *The Guardian*, 16 January 2022.

development is a data reality, and here Hechter's critics are wrong: but on the other hand, it does not follow a 'colonial' pattern but one that reflects the deep-seated structural marginalisation and disempowerment of provincial England and Wales. Whenever a major corrective emerges (for example in Scottish or northern starting points for Eurostar or HS2) it is always revised up in cost and down in distance from London. Hechter's focus on '"traditional" social organization of the periphery' likewise seems more accurately to refer to the Reform or Leave towns of eastern England, where 'lower per capita income, and traditional norms and values' go hand in hand.[73] In short, the Hechter model has significant explanatory power, but in the modern era (as opposed to say pre-1922 Ireland) that power is at least equally – and quite probably more – effective in explaining internal inequalities in the core state than in creating a model of the colonised Celt. It is also much clearer than it was in 1975 that Irish independence oriented away from economic dependence and Scottish devolution have both made a significant and positive difference. Why that is the case in Scotland and not in Wales and Northern Ireland requires more space than is available here.[74]

The extent to which regional inequalities displace Hechter's national/colonial model damages his argument in other areas; for example, in stating that 'The greater the economic inequalities between collectivities, the greater the probability that the less advantaged collectivity will be status solidary, and hence, will resist political integration', and in maintaining 'identifiable cultural differences' including 'language (accent), distinctive religious practices, and life-style'.[75] Part of the issue with English regional unequal development is surely the opposite of this: that England is so politically integrated that it cannot articulate regional interests effectively. The very low vote (22%) for a north-eastern regional assembly in 2004 is only one piece of evidence for this.

But there is also a question as to whether, historically speaking, things were ever quite as Hechter depicted them. On page thirty-nine he argues that:

> The superordinate group, now ensconced as the core, seeks to stabilize and monopolize its advantages through policies aiming at the institutionalization and perpetuation of the existing stratification system. Ultimately, it seeks to regulate the allocation of social roles such that those roles commonly defined as having high status are generally reserved for its members. Conversely, individuals from the less advanced group tend to be denied access to these roles.

73. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 28.

74. *Financial Times*, analysis of OECD regional accounts data; IPPR December 2021. See also 'Infrastructure in the UK', (ONS).

75. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 43.

While this highly schematised model is appealing in its simplicity, it is ahistorical. It works for Irish Catholics, but hardly for Scottish Presbyterians, and goes against other dimensions of colonial theorising, such as the co-option of local elites, which works well for Ireland or Scotland, providing the elites were Protestants, and not even Anglicans in Scotland's case. The large-scale repatriation of nabob and slave trade capital to Scotland, which commentators such as Sir Tom Devine, Julian Hoppit or Andrew Mackillop now regard as critical to economic alignment with England in the Victorian period seems to elude Hechter entirely. His view that 'the disadvantaged position of the Celtic fringe relative to England has not substantially changed' and that the diffusion of industrial concentration was affected by national 'Celtic' boundaries reads very uneasily in the context of the levels of industrial power in Belfast, Dundee or Glasgow in 1900.[76] And this by no means depends on new research: Christopher Harvie was stressing industrial overcapacity in Scotland in the first edition of *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes* (1981, 4th ed., 2000).

Moreover, Hechter's argument that in 'an impoverished and culturally alien region there is little incentive for members of the core group to migrate there in force' works better for Scotland up to the 1970s than it does for Wales, where the proportion of English born residents was always higher and often much higher than Scotland: but it arguably only works for Scotland because its institutions rather than its development provided a barrier.[77] Hechter also omits any consideration of the historical role of the Council of Wales and the Marches and sees the principality both as upland and pastoral and also a key source of English food supply, an apparent contradiction that stands in need of clearer resolution.[78] Scotland's distinct institutions were a barrier that Hechter does little to address: if Lindsay Paterson's *The Autonomy of Modern Scotland* (1989) is too maximalist a case for these, it was one from which Hechter's argument would benefit, as would the kind of detailed coverage of institutional and associational development offered in the magnificent Cork University Press collection *An Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (2017). Wales was much less protected by institutional capacity despite having 50% Welsh speakers as opposed to 16% Irish speakers in Ireland in 1921: institutions and associations simply counted for more.[79] Moreover – here history is important – Wales did not formally exist between the passing of the Wales and Berwick Act (20 Geo II.c.42), which legislated the Principality out of political existence in 1746, and 1967 and the passage of the Welsh language Act which recognised Wales as a legal entity. The modern fashion for four-nations history was not part of

76. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 130, 139.
77. Ibid., 42–3.
78. Ibid., 70–4.
79. Ibid., 269.

Victorian or Georgian memory, representation or law: England, Scotland and Ireland were the three kingdoms and Wales was marginal to distinct cultural representation.

While there are some positive aspects to Hechter's understanding of history, such as the much greater understanding of the hostility to Dissenters in England,[80] there are also huge and surely extraordinary (even in 1975) errors:

> The secession of Ireland was not in any ultimate sense due to the existence of prior cultural differences between England and Ireland…Similarly, its secession was not fundamentally a result of the peculiar treatment afforded Ireland, e.g., its particular 'historical legacy,' relative to the other Celtic regions in the period 1642 to 1846 … Nor was it due to backward material conditions caused by Ireland's dependent development as an internal colony.[81]

The presence of a culturally and religiously alien landlord class, the systematic deprivation of Irish native landholders, the vast governmental and landlord-driven failure of the Famine, which saw landlords evict tenants to avoid being responsible for their relief, the vast presence of Irish soldiers and other exiles in Continental Europe and North America and the hybridisations of national culture that developed there, the neglect of a democratic mandate for Home Rule and the descent into violence facilitated by British acquiescence in Unionist gun-running and the presence of its chief advocate in the British cabinet as Attorney-General no less: all these might be thought to be cultural gulfs of great account, and are held so today by the Irish state. They cast a long shadow: the last of the twenty-six Irish holders of the Military Order of Maria Theresa, a pilot in the Austrian imperial navy, died in 1986. The Irish experience may resemble the Scottish in a far severer form, but it has little to do with the Welsh, for whom national politics and language are as separate as their promotion in Ireland rendered them adjacent. Not for the first time, a theoretical and collectivist view of 'the Celtic fringe' lets Hechter down.

Internal Colonialism was a landmark book at a landmark time: appearing at the heartland of the first era of serious legislation for devolution to Scotland and Wales. Its history and historiography is patchy at best; its 'scientific' graphs and tables have been overtaken by later assessments better grounded in empirical evidence. Paradoxically, its most controversial area, that of uneven development in the interests of the centralisation of power, is the central argument that

80. Ibid., 268.

81. Ibid., 292. See also Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (London, 1992).

endures, though not in the colonial context that it introduced to thinking about Scotland and Wales in particular. As I argued in my 25th anniversary retrospective to the Political Studies Association in 2000, *Internal Colonialism* is a flawed book. Today, another quarter of a century later, it is indeed a curate's egg on the turn, but in a strange way, not past its sell-by date. Hechter's text is full of original, partial and often unsubstantiated arguments, but ones that nonetheless have changed our thinking about 'Britain' and continue to do so, if not always in the ways its author intended.

The World-System in One Country

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Any reappraisal of Hechter after fifty years must surely begin by recovering the work's original context and intentions, and then measuring them against the intellectual demands of our current conjuncture. To do so is immediately to be struck by a curious paradox. The 'internal colonialism' thesis, put forth as a model for the deep history of Britain and Ireland, was a product of the global conflagrations of the 1960s: viewed not from Dundee, Swansea or Belfast but from upper Manhattan. Hechter's was an attempt to employ the history of British state formation as a set of resources enabling fresh analysis of the Third Worldist and Black radical challenges to American liberalism at the close of the 1960s. Hechter traced the book's origins to his participation in student activism on Columbia's Harlem-adjacent campus in 1968, when large-scale protests were triggered by the University's plans to build a large and exclusive gymnasium in Morningside Park.[82] Behind this apparently local complaint was of course, the war in Vietnam, which Hechter, like many of his generation, understood as a colonial bloodbath that pitted disproportionately Black American troops against their natural allies in a Third World struggling for liberation.

The hackles of the book's British reviewers were raised by an implied comparison between what they took to be the 'quaint' ethnic antagonisms of Britain and Ireland and the bitter violence of US-American racism.[83] Yet Hechter's comparison was not – at least primarily – intended further to provoke a London intelligentsia buffeted and bemused by the triple shock of civil conflict in Northern Ireland and resurgent nationalisms in Wales and Scotland. The book's selection of its 'Celtic' case studies was motivated, Hechter claimed, by the pragmatism of the historical sociologist: as a state with a long written history of sovereign existence, as well as extensive statistical records, the United Kingdom offered more extensive raw materials for the study of political development over time than newly-independent postcolonial states.[84] This analysis, in turn, could be fed back into new theories that could better predict the future of both established and newly-forming national states.

82. Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (New Brunswick NJ, 1999), xxv–xxviii.

83. Ibid., 348, xv.

84. Ibid., 10–12.

Focusing on the UK, which until the late 1960s was seen by sociologists as a 'model national society', was also central to the book's argumentative strategy.[85] Doubtless inspired by his exposure to Black nationalism on Columbia's campus, Hechter was determined to establish the inevitability and thus the legitimacy of nationalist challenges to discrimination and inequality within even the most 'modern' societies. It was mistaken, Hechter warned, to expect that nationalist challenges to state authority – whether they came from Malcolm X or Winnie Ewing – would simply disappear once overwhelmed by the integrative mechanisms of an industrial division of labour.[86] Ethnic antagonism could persist in an economically integrated and politically centralised state like the UK because of the long-run consequences of the cultural arrogance and economic domination of a historic core region: in this case, England. By forestalling state-formation in Wales, Scotland and Ireland, the economically advanced English core established a pattern of 'dependent development' in the Celtic periphery in the early modern period.[87] English elites selectively incorporated Anglicising elements of the 'Celtic fringe' while subjecting its masses to religious, linguistic and ethnic discrimination, producing what Hechter termed a 'cultural division of labour' that disproportionately confined Scottish, Welsh and Irish subjects to lower-status occupations even when they migrated to the 'core' for economic reasons.[88] In contrast to the deep and diversified industrialisation of the English south, peripheral Celtic populations faced an unenviable choice between work in a limited set of extractive and heavy industries, controlled by metropolitan interests; or varieties of rural agrarian poverty.[89] This had the effect, however, of strengthening ethnic solidarity and encouraging political mobilisation, with the result that successive waves first of Irish, then of Scottish and Welsh nationalism roiled the British polity from the late nineteenth century onwards.[90]

Especially after fifty years, historians are bound to find fault with what is undeniably a crude characterisation of a binary, hub-and-spokes relationship between an overweening English 'core' and a strikingly undifferentiated 'Celtic fringe'. While Hechter styles this as necessary ideal-typical simplification, it is also a serious analytical oversight. It leads him constantly to downplay the distinct position of Ireland within English and British empire-building projects of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; still less to grasp the truly exceptional crime of the Great Irish Famine.[91] A more subtle omission concerns the way in

85. Ibid., 350.
86. Ibid., 33–4.
87. Ibid., 82–6.
88. Ibid., 109–19.
89. Ibid., 137–50, 191–206.
90. Ibid., 208–33, 264–311.
91. Ibid., 270.

which Hechter's conception of an English 'core' and a 'Celtic' periphery forecloses discussion of what has more recently come to be thought of as the 'English', still less of the 'Northern' question.[92] With some rather foggy American geography, Hechter equated 'upland', pastoral, thin-soiled Britain with the 'Celtic fringe', and the richer agrarian 'lowlands' with England, effectively reducing the latter to London and the Home Counties[93] (Cornwall/Kernow, for its part, is unproblematically assimilated to this southern English 'core').[94] It is very hard to understand the historical geography of the English north and Midlands – each of which have their own claim to a 'peripheral' status dominated by extractive industry – on this basis; still less to grasp, as James Boyce has done, that the reclaimed marshes of the Fens were a significant territory for the development of early-modern English imperial projects.[95]

Walking around London, Manchester or Cambridge in 2025, it is hard not to think of Hechter's evocation of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Glasgow, Swansea and Belfast as 'enclave cities' analogous with colonial port towns, more integrated with global markets than with their immediate hinterlands, their fates determined in distant board-rooms by foreign owners of capital. The fact that the ultimate owners of such capital are now more likely to be residents of Abu Dhabi, Shanghai or Delaware than of the Home Counties draws attention to a further, more fundamental, limitation of Hechter's analytical framework: its resolutely insular scope. This is particularly surprising given the key influence that the pioneer of world-systems theory, Immanuel Wallerstein, exercised over the doctoral thesis that would become *Internal Colonialism*. With the limited exception of the book's eighth chapter (a somewhat unconvincing attempt to modify Wallerstein's account of 'servitor imperialism' by detailing the marginally lower support for Tory candidates in the 'Celtic periphery' in late nineteenth-century elections to the House of Commons) 'internal' colonialism is considered in splendid isolation from the broader sweep of world history.[96] Instead of locating British peripheries within the totality of the 'world system', Hechter constructs a British system of English 'core' and Celtic 'periphery' by way of analogy with that system.

This, too, was by design. Hechter's research programme was focused on the elaboration of a discrete British case study that could be considered within the fundamentally comparativist historical sociology of 'national develop-

92. See *inter alia* Alex Niven, *New Model Island: How to Build a Radical Culture Beyond the Idea of England* (London, 2019); Tom Hazeldine, *The Northern Question: A History of a Divided Country* (London, 2020).

93. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 52–3.

94. Ibid., 64–5.

95. James Boyce, *Imperial Mud: The Fight for the Fens* (London, 2020).

96. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 234–64.

ment' elaborated by another mentor, Charles Tilly. Localising the story of core-periphery relations to England and the 'Celtic fringe' was essential to the project of turning the historical sociology of Britain and Ireland into a useable case study for shedding comparative light on political developments elsewhere.[97] Hechter's alignment with Tilly's program, however, placed him fundamentally at odds with the more influential historiographical direction announced by J. G. A. Pocock in the year of *Internal Colonialism's* first publication, with its emphasis on the place of Scotland, Wales and Ireland within a larger 'British World' that included his native New Zealand and other settler colonies.[98] *Internal Colonialism* does not offer us any obvious resources for thinking through the question of how inequalities between ethnic groups within the British Isles were recreated – or transcended – through 'Celtic' participation in the British Empire: surely the most significant scale on which an 'ethnic division of labour' was implemented. It could not, for to do so would be to dissolve the boundary of the 'national' unit of political development that interested Hechter. This was a necessary limiting framework constructed to enable the work of sociological comparison between discrete cases. Even within its resolutely national framework, however, Hechter's project does not align completely with the broader turn in 1970s and 1980s American sociology: towards 'bringing the state back in' to the science of society.[99] Hechter was interested in class, status and economic development – the terrain of classical sociology – not the history of British state-building.[100] His agenda was not that of Linda Colley in *Britons* (1992) or John Brewer in *The Sinews of Power* (1989). It was derived not from a knowingly iconoclastic insistence on the strength and centralisation of the British state, but an earlier, more naïve surprise at the degree of tension and diversity revealed by the multiple national resurgences of the later 1960s.

Despite this story of apparently missed connections, however, it would be wrong to conclude that, after fifty years, there is nothing to be gained from reading *Internal Colonialism*. On the contrary: British historians may finally be arriving at a point where we can make good use of it. We now live in a country that far more obviously resembles Hechter's assemblage of competing ethno-cultural status-groups than the model of an integrated, class-based 'industrial' society he was critiquing in his work. Precisely because of the ways in which it is clunky, abstract and limited, Hechter's book is still able to pose fundamen-

97. Charles Tilly and Gabriel Ardant (eds) *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, 1975).

98. J. G. A. Pocock, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject', *Journal of Modern History*, 47.4 (1975), 601–24.

99. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol (eds), *Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research* (Cambridge, 1985).

100. This, incidentally, was one of Tom Nairn's main criticisms of the book: Tom Nairn, 'The Twilight of the British State', *New Left Review*, I/101–102 (February 1, 1977), 42.

tal questions that more fine-grained and globally-oriented historiographies of these islands struggle to address. How has power been exercised over space in modern Britain? How has today's extraordinary acme of centralisation – economic, cultural, political – been reached? Why are London and the south-east, the medieval and early-modern 'core' identified by Hechter, still so uncomfortably dominant in the life not just of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but of provincial England, too? Whatever its flaws, *Internal Colonialism* has the important virtue of being specifically focused on those questions of economic dignity and control that are today most salient in the fractious territorial politics of contemporary Britain. It also reminds us that, in our turn to all things global, the internal complexity and divisions of the imperial 'core' should not be allowed to slip out of view. This is not just a matter – *contra* Pocock – of an 'archipelagic' equality of plural narratives, but of deeply unequal power relations. *Internal Colonialism* challenges us to think afresh about how the territorial politics of Britain and Ireland have and have not been shaped by the global histories of capital and empire that now dominate the field of British history.

Hechter, Ireland and the New British History

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I first encountered Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism* early in my lecturing career when compiling a reading list for an undergraduate course entitled 'Uniting the Kingdoms? Britishness and the four nations, c.1707–1832'. Revisiting the text for this roundtable, I realised that, although I had read the introduction and dipped into the sections on the eighteenth century, I had never read the book in its entirety. As I ploughed through the statistical analyses of large economic, demographic and electoral datasets from the period 1851 to 1966 which form the crux of Hechter's analysis my earlier cursoriness seemed more excusable. To the historian, or at least to this historian, Hechter's social scientific methodology, with its deployment of exotic tools such as the Kaiser varimax criterion and standardised regression coefficients, can seem quite alien, and its theoretical generalisations over-simplified. That disciplinary suspicion cuts both ways. For Hechter, the historian's impressionistic approach and analysis of non-comparable evidence were often lacking.[101] In comments bound to raise the hackles of Irish, Scottish, and Welsh historians alike, he would question whether the histories of such 'peripheral territories' held any intrinsic interest or significance other than as case studies to test particular sociological models.[102]

In what follows, I'd like to offer some brief reflections on how Hechter's thesis pertains to developments in the field with which I'm most familiar – the history of Britain and Ireland in the long eighteenth century. Hechter's book appeared in 1975, a year after J. G. A. Pocock's 'British history: a plea for a new subject' was first published. Both Hechter and Pocock made a novel case for a history of the 'these islands' that integrated Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England into a single frame, but there were significant differences in their approaches and emphases. Hechter detailed the progressive political, cultural, and economic subordination of the 'Celtic' peripheries to a hegemonic English state and a cultural division of economic labour which, from the late nineteenth century onwards, provided the stimulus for nationalist challenges. Pocock, while not denying that historical interactions between the four nations were marked by the increasing dominance

101. Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism. The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1535–1966* (London, 1975), 243.

102. Michael Hechter, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject: Comments', *Journal of Modern History*, 47 (1975), 625–6.

of England over an 'Anglo-Celt frontier', insisted that British history was not a 'simple narrative of a monolithic empire's interaction with its external proletarians', nor could it be restricted to the territories of the North Atlantic archipelago but must necessarily encompass the wider British diaspora. Whereas Hechter described a process of anglicisation and Celtic reaction, Pocock proposed a more reciprocal and multilateral set of interactions within an unstable British polity. As a sociologist, Hechter was primarily concerned with testing theories of development rather than championing plural peripheral histories. As an intellectual historian, Pocock was interested in questions of sovereignty, political allegiance, and historical consciousness.

Neither Hechter's ambitious thesis, nor Pocock's 'plea for a new subject' had much immediate impact on British and Irish historiography, but when the so-called 'new' British history began to gain momentum from the 1990s onwards, it was Pocock rather than Hechter with whom historians of the long eighteenth century were more likely to engage.[103] While *Internal Colonialism* was recognised as pioneering in its approach, references tended to be confined to brief footnotes in which Hechter's thesis was variously dismissed as 'anglocentric' in its presentation of the Celtic nations as largely passive actors, or as betraying 'American sensitivities to colonialism'.[104] Hechter's narrative of the eighteenth century as a period in which Scottish, Welsh, and Irish elites, anxious to secure English investment, assimilated to English culture and sought 'to dissociate themselves as much as possible from the mass of their countrymen' struck many historians as reductive.[105] It could not accommodate evidence of an intensifying affirmation of 'Irishness' amongst sections of the Protestant elite in Ireland, nor could it explain the popularity of James Macpherson's *Fingal* (1762) and the appearance of institutions like the Highland Society of London in 1778. Moreover, in emphasising *anglicisation,* Hechter neglected to consider the emergence of a more capacious and arguably more flexible mode of identification in the period after 1707: Britishness.

In one of the most prominent contributions to the 'new' British history – Linda Colley's *Britons* (1992) – Hechter's thesis functions as a useful foil to Colley's central claim that Britishness, as it developed in the eighteenth century, was promoted as much from the margins as from the centre of the newly-forged state. The evolution of Britishness was not to be explained 'primarily in terms of an English "core" imposing its cultural and political hegemony on a helpless and

103. Alexander Murdoch's history of the British and Irish Isles in the long eighteenth century, for example, cites Pocock's article as an early inspiration. Alexander Murdoch, *British History, 1660–1832. National Identity and Local Culture* (Basingstoke, 1998), ix.

104. See, for example, Jim Smyth, *The Making of the United Kingdom, 1660–1800* (Harlow, 2001), 233; J. C. D. Clark, 'Protestantism, Nationalism, and National Identity: 1660–1800', *The Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), 255.

105. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 117.

defrauded Celtic periphery.'[106] Whereas Hechter focused on internal processes and the impacts of uneven industrialisation, Colley stressed the importance of various external 'others' in shaping the disparate nations of Britain into a more coherent whole, most crucially, through the prolonged experience of war, a phenomenon barely considered by Hechter. Indeed, the absence of war from Hechter's explanatory framework is striking, given how central military mobilisation and imperial conflict have been to subsequent accounts of British state formation. Protestantism, which in Hechter's account tended to operate centrifugally, with Welsh non-conformity and Scottish Presbyterianism entrenching estrangement from the Anglican metropolitan core, was, in Colley's analysis, a centripetal force binding Britons together and differentiating them from a hostile continental Catholicism.

While few exponents of the new British history have engaged substantively with Hechter's work, the field has continued to be animated by some of the questions it posed: should the interactions between the four nations be understood in terms of domination and subordination, or as a set of multilateral encounters? Did the construction of Britishness entail the imposition of cultural uniformity, or could it be reconciled with cultural differences?[107] Were the fractures in British Protestantism as important as the commonalities? And, finally, where might Ireland sit within these narratives?

Ireland has always occupied an anomalous position within archipelagic histories. It was excluded from Colley's analysis on the grounds that the Catholicism of the majority debarred it from a Britishness defined by Protestantism. This, as already noted, was less of an issue for Hechter, who insisted that Ireland's more sustained separatist trajectory should not be explained by the Catholicism of the majority population. Instead, Hechter attributed the twenty-six counties' early exit from the union to the 'particular mode of dependent development which emerged in Ireland during the period 1846–1921', with the failure to develop industrial enclaves inhibiting the development of an electoral politics based on class rather than cultural solidarities.[108] This developmental dependency on the English core was not, he maintained, a uniquely Irish feature, though it assumed a distinctive form in Ireland.

Hechter's analysis would seem, on the face of it, of immediate relevance to the lively and ongoing debate on the question of whether Ireland before and after the union should be described as a colony. Yet, here again, there has been

106. Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (1992; New Haven, revised edn, 2012), 6.

107. Keith Robbins' account of nineteenth-century Britain, in emphasising the 'blending of Britain', has often been aligned with Hechter's analysis. Keith Robbins, 'An Imperial and Multinational Polity: The 'Scene from the Centre', 1832–1922' in Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer (eds), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London, 1995), 327.

108. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 266–72.

only a limited acknowledgement of the thesis. This can be explained in part by the approaches that Irish historians have tended to take to this question. Their focus, with some notable exceptions, has largely been on colonialism's political and cultural dimensions, rather than its economic aspects, a neglect one critic has attributed to the 'precipitous decline of the Marxist presence in the Irish historical profession'.[109] For the eighteenth century, debates on Irish economic history have usually centred on whether pre-union Ireland was economically stagnant and whether its impoverishment was a function of British policy. Those who query the applicability of the colonial model have often pointed to the relative dynamism of the Irish economy from the 1740s onwards.[110] However, Hechter's analysis, in including Scotland with its much more positive, if unevenly distributed, story of economic expansion after 1707, highlighted that short-term dynamism could mask a more structural pattern of economic subordination over the *longue durée.* Whereas Irish historians have shown relatively little interest in pursuing Hechter's materialist analysis of Irish colonialism, this approach has been more readily taken up by the economists and sociologists who have applied dependency theory to explain Irish economic development.[111] The deeper structural origins of Great Famine (1845–50), which is barely mentioned in Hechter's book, have been traced in recent accounts to the early modern devastation of the Irish economy and its restructuring as an agrarian extractive producer.[112] But the singular severity of the Irish Famine also poses difficult questions about how far meaningful parallels can be drawn between the experiences of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales within the internal colonial model.

Hechter's model also sidesteps, or slices through, one of the knottier questions upon which debates on Ireland's colonial status have routinely pivoted: whether the Irish experience was closer to that of Europe or to that of colonised non-European countries. In an influential intervention, Sean Connolly argued that many of the features of eighteenth-century Ireland that were typically identified as evidence of its colonial character – the profound inequality between rulers and ruled, the imposition of a harsh system of religious disabilities – were

109. Stephen Howe, 'Questioning the (Bad) Questions: Was Ireland a Colony', *Irish Historical Studies*, 36 (2008), 146.

110. S. J. Connolly, 'Eighteenth-Century Ireland. Colony or ancien régime?' in D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day, *The Making of Modern Irish History. Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* (London and New York, 1996), 15–33. Connolly's arguments in relation to the eighteenth-century Irish economy drew heavily on Louis Cullen's pioneering social and economic histories of the period. L. M. Cullen, *An Economic History of Ireland since 1660* (London, 1972).

111. See, for example, Denis O'Hearn, 'Ireland and the Atlantic Economy' and Terrence McDonough and Eamonn Slater, 'Colonialism, Feudalism, and the Mode of Production in Nineteenth-Century Ireland' in Terrence McDonough (ed.) *Was Ireland a Colony? Economics, Culture, and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2005).

112. William J. Smyth, 'The Longue Durée: Imperial Britain and Colonial Ireland', *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine* (Cork, 2012), 46–63.

shared across European societies of the *ancien régime*.[113] As such, Irish history was best understood within a broader European context rather than through comparisons and parallels with the colonised peoples of the Americas, South Asia, or Africa. The internal colonial model, however, did not require a distinction to be drawn between the European experience and the colonial experience. Hechter identified numerous parallels between the processes to which the countries of the 'Celtic fringe' were subject and similar developments in the nations of Western Europe, leading him to speculate that internal colonialism may have been 'the *modal* form of national development in industrial societies'.[114] Framed in these terms, some of the objections to the colonial model as applied to Ireland, in particular the implied equivalence in racial attitudes towards the Irish and non-white colonised peoples, become less insurmountable, even if Hechter identified anti-Celtic prejudice as a form of racism.[115] At the same time, this begs the question of how colonialism differs from more conventional state-building. Is it, as Stephen Howe, has put it, merely a question of retrospective adjudication? 'If the conquered population comes to accept the state into which their ancestors had been forcibly inducted as legitimate, then what has been happening is state-building. If they do not, it is colonialism'.[116]

Published in the 1970s, when Welsh and Scottish nationalism were resurgent, *Internal Colonialism* may have been conjuring a moment when the break-up of the United Kingdom would encourage a retroactive re-casting of the polity as a colonial project. If Hechter wrote at a moment when the future of the United Kingdom seemed uncertain, that uncertainty has hardly receded. Internal colonialism may not provide a fully adequate account of the eighteenth century, but it reminds us that the Union has always rested upon asymmetries of power and development. Whether those asymmetries are interpreted as state-building or colonialism remains, as ever, a matter not only of historical analysis but of political judgement.

113. Connolly, 'Eighteenth-Century Ireland. Colony or ancien régime?'; Connolly and other historians of eighteenth-century Ireland have nonetheless maintained that this is not necessarily an either/or question. As Ian McBride observes in his survey history of eighteenth-century Ireland, meaningful parallels can be drawn between the Anglo-Irish relationship and Anglo-Scottish and Anglo-Welsh relations from the medieval period onwards, while also recognising affinities between early-modern Ireland and the settlement of the Americas, as well as the commonalities with multiple, multi-ethnic kingdoms elsewhere in Europe. Ian McBride, *Eighteenth-Century Ireland: The Isle of Slaves* (Dublin, 2009).

114. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 350.

115. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, xvi.

116. Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire. Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford, 2000), 19.

Internal Colonialism and the Unionist Fringe

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Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism* (1975; 1977) and Tom Nairn's *The Break-up of Britain* (1977; 1981) spawned several inquiries into the sociology of Scotland's nationalism, my own amongst them.[117] By locating uneven economic development (Gellner) and world systems theory (Wallerstein) within the British context, Hechter and Nairn anticipated that nationalism would imperil the British state.[118] Their timing was auspicious. Decolonisation had gathered pace across the British Empire. Demands first aired by Scottish nationalists in 1945 for the United Nations to recognise and restore Scotland's nationhood were revived.[119] An impactful by-election victory for the SNP in 1967 was followed by a Royal Commission on the constitutional future of the UK (1969–73) and the then highest electoral return (30.4%) for the SNP in 1974. Popular tartanry moved medium from print to television, with the BBC's *White Heather Club* (1958–68) and STV's *Shindig* (1968–88) projecting pernicious Celtifications of Scottish culture. After imperial markets for Scottish goods had contracted during the first half of the twentieth century, a branch plant economy emerged in the second half to benefit not England's but a largely American economic core. Between 1950 and 1975 the number of overseas-owned manufacturing companies in Scotland rose from sixty-five to 357, amounting to a disproportionately high 20% (1966–71) then 25% (1972–5) of all such companies in the UK.[120]

When Nairn predicted the concept of internal colonialism 'would probably be more useful than any other in the future', he left an important caution: Hechter had mischaracterised the unitary state, underplayed the effects of imperialism, and his theory lacked historical understanding.[121] The political unions

117. David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* (London, 1992); Lindsay Paterson, *The Autonomy of Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1994); Graeme Morton, *Unionist Nationalism: Governing Urban Scotland, 1830–1860* (East Linton, 1999).

118. Ernest Gellner (ed.), *Thought and Change* (London, 1965); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System: Volume I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1974).

119. Krishan Kumar, 'Empire, Nation, and National Identities' in Andrew Thompson (ed.), *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2012), 311.

120. Pavlos Dimitratos, Ioanna Liouka, Douglas Ross and Steven Young, 'The Multinational Enterprise and Subsidiary Evolution: Scotland since 1945', *Business History*, 51.3 (2009), 403.

121. Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain* (London, 1981), 65n.

that united the Kingdom had left Britain's Celtic fringes with autonomous governance structures ill-fitting to Hechter's theory. The concepts of 'Ukania' (Nairn) and 'Yookay' (Williams) and the words of a Scottish-American US President in 2025 point to this challenge: 'You have many different names you go by. England, if you want to cut off a couple of areas. And you go UK, and you have Britain and you have Great Britain. You got more names than any other country in history, I think.'[122] Poking fun at nomenclature opens fault lines in British national development and questions the embarkation point of the internal colonialism thesis. In a union not a unitary British state, neither assimilation nor internal colonisation could develop as Hechter predicted.

Hechter gave little attention to civil society as the determinant of national identity and overlooked its place in the governance of Scotland post-1707.[123] Yet a separate legal system, church organisation, and national education have long been identified as the spine of Scottish civil society. Whether civil society is characterised in Tocquevillian terms as a counterpoint to the state, with an Hegelian warning that the state will inevitably exert some level of control, or as the Gramscian notion of a distinct political space in which hegemony could be attained, it speaks to agency.[124] During Europe's age of nationalism, Edinburgh was the 'deposed capital' where the courts and the powers and responsibilities to govern the nation were retained and operated alongside British assimilation.[125] Parliamentary reform (1832, 1868, 1884), burgh reform (1833, 1889), poor relief (1845), entail (1848), civil registration (1854), marriage (1856), mental health (1857), policing (1857, 1892), the census (1861), public health (1867), national education (1872), restoration of the Catholic hierarchy (1878), crofters' holdings (1886), and heritable securities (1894) all kept Scotland distinct from England. Free standing clubs, associations and societies were also formed to intervene in the health, welfare, science, politics and prosperity of the nation, allowing social capital to be dispensed by men and women otherwise excluded from the state.[126] Supported by those most active in local government, this was the structure affirmed

122. Tom Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and its Monarchy* (London, 1988), 93–4; R. Williams, 'Nineteen Eighty-Four in 1984', *Monthly Review*, 36.7 (1984); BBC News 15 July 2025: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5yg7eg8w980 [last accessed 15 July 2025].

123. He confined himself to aligning associational activity with Weber's understanding of class and market; Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (Berkeley, 1977), 217.

124. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, J. P. Mayer (ed.), George Lawrence (trans.) (London, 1994), 68; M. H. Jessen, 'Civil Society in the Shadow of the Neoliberal State: Corporations as the Primary Subjects of (Neoliberal) Civil Society', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 34 (2021), 162; Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 1, J. A. Buttigieg (ed.) (New York, 1975), §48.

125. R. J. Morris, 'Scotland 1830–1914: A Nation within a Nation' in W. H. Fraser and R. J. Morris (eds), *People and Society in Scotland, II: 1830–1914* (Edinburgh, 1990), 1–7.

126. Graeme Morton, 'The Conservative Hold over Scottish Civil Society: Evidence from the 1854 Edinburgh Pollbook', *Parliamentary History*, 45.1 (2026), 110–31.

by Union that determined how and why Scottish nationalists eschewed both assimilation and internal colonialism to resist state centralisation.[127]

Reclaiming, protecting and enhancing self-governance was mobilised as Unionist-nationalism and given form in associations for Scottish rights, home rule and devolution, in commemorations of Wallace, Burns, and Scott, and in everyday makers of civic nationhood.[128] So can there be any encouragement, even in part, for Hechter's contention that 'the only cultural group that remained outside an amalgamated British nationalism was Celtic'?[129] In Scotland, the evidence is thin. Scottish and Irish nationalists found little common ground beyond expediency when making their respective demands during the Home Rule decades (1880s–1920s).[130] But J. S. Blackie (1809–95) campaigned successfully for a Chair in Celtic at the University of Edinburgh (1884), and there was a brief and inconsequential Celtic nationalist movement in the Edwardian period, with Edinburgh hosting the third of three Pan Celtic conferences organised by the Celtic Association in 1907.[131] The locus of Celticism within nationalist discourse is best illustrated by Theodore Napier (1845–1924) who forged intellectual and campaigning links between Celtic nationalism, Home Rule and Stuart Legitimism.[132] Napier contributed to *The Celtic Monthly: A Magazine for Highlanders* and established *The Fiery Cross* (*Crois Tara*) in 1901.[133] He accused the English of 'racial superiority' and in 1904 was Scotland's representative at the Welsh national Eisteddfod alongside pan-Celtic delegates from Ireland, the Isle of Man, and Britanny.[134] Ultimately, he turned his Celticism into Legitimism, condemning the Revolution settlement of 1688 that ushered in the Hanoverian constitutional state. His political vision favoured monarchical rule over home rule, and sought the clans' return, yet it was an argument buttressed by instrumental concerns over public spending, nomenclature, and the royal mint.[135]

Napier's views were often derided and Hechter warns against amending the theory of internal colonialism by reference to peripheral concerns, not aggregates.[136] Celticism, Legitimism and Home Rule lacked widespread electoral sup-

127. Graeme Morton, 'Scottish Rights and "Centralisation" in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Nations and Nationalism*, 2.2 (1996), 257–79.

128. Morton, *Unionist-Nationalism*, 97–154.

129. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 10.

130. Graeme Morton, 'Scotland is Britain: The Union and Unionist-Nationalism, 1807–1907', *The Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies*, 1.2 (2008), 128–32.

131. Ian Stewart, *The Celts–A Modern History* (Princeton, 2025), 313–31.

132. Graeme Morton, 'Loyalism, Legitimism, and the Neo-Jacobite Challenge to the Anglo-Scottish Union, *Atlantic Studies*, 21.2 (2024): 307–29.

133. I. B. Stewart, 'Of Crofters, Celts and Claymores: *The Celtic Magazine* and the Highland Cultural Nationalist Movement, 1875–88', *Historical Research*, 89 (2016), 112.

134. *The Times*, 7 September 1904, 6.

135. Morton, 'Loyalism, Legitimism, and the Neo-Jacobite Challenge', 318–21.

136. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 4–6.

port, but banal Unionist-nationalism was the norm and few bothered to either honour or condemn the constitution in 1907.[137] 'The Union, Our Only Game' was one headline.[138] Was this because Scotland's people had long been aggregated in the Lowlands, were economically relatively successful, overwhelmingly urban, and by these indicators 'modern' and 'core' rather than 'backward' and 'peripheral', with little use for 'blood and belonging' nationalism given the extent of their autonomy to govern? In the nineteenth century, up to 87% of Scots lived in the central lowlands, and contrary to Hechter's reading of the data, Scotland positioned second amongst Europe's most urbanised nations in 1911. When Lowland Scots spoke of the Gaeltacht – during the 1846–7 potato blight, for example – many adopted language that chastised Celtic inferiorism.[139] Yet to find evidence of an ethnic division of labour we must shift attention from Highland/Lowland or England/Scotland to the predominance of Protestants in skilled and Catholics in unskilled occupations, although the pervasiveness of sectarianism is of significant debate.[140]

Hechter's Lowland problem also extends to the economy. By matching capital and English technological transfer with cheaper human resources, Scotland did not follow the path of dependency theory. Significant industrial specialisms marketed to Empire operated across its regions, not between a Scottish periphery and British core.[141] Fewer benefits were felt in the Highlands, but T. C. Smout reminds us that the pressures of core and periphery were both unique and general, and that included times when the economy did comparatively well.[142] Scotland's GDP peaked with industrialisation, with more of its industrialists becoming half millionaires and a disproportionately high number of working Scots making tax returns in 1851; although this would decline.[143] Hechter changed his argument to claim the Lowlands were overdeveloped 'by invitation', but that becomes an attempt to explain away the mainstream experience.[144]

137. *The Scotsman*, 14 March 1907.

138. *The Scotsman*, 13 February 1907.

139. Graeme Morton, *Ourselves and Others: Scotland 1832–1914* (Edinburgh, 2012), 30.

140. Michael Rosie, *The Sectarian Myth in Scotland* (London, 2004); Steve Bruce, *Sectarianism in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1999); Patricia Walls and Rory Williams 'Sectarianism at Work: Accounts of Employment Discrimination against Irish Catholics in Scotland', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 26:4 (2003): 632–61.

141. T. M. Devine, 'Industrialisation' in T. M. Devine, C. H. Lee and G. C. Peden (eds) *The Transformation of Scotland: The Economy since 1700* (Edinburgh, 2005), 34–7; 57–8.

142. McCrone, *Understanding Scotland*, 61–2; T. C. Smout, 'Centre and Periphery in History; with some Thoughts on Scotland as a Case Study', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 18, 3 (1980): 256–71; Devine, 'Industrialisation', 63–4.

143. C. H. Lee, 'Scotland, 1860–1939' in Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson (eds), *The Economic History of Britain, II Economic Maturity, 1860–1939* (Cambridge, 2004), 444.

144. McCrone, *Understanding Scotland*, 59–67; Michael Hechter, 'Internal Colonialism Revisited', *Cencrastus*, 10 (1982), 8–11; T. C. Smout, 'Scotland and England: Is Dependency a Symptom or a Cause of Underdevelopment?', *Review*, 3.4 (1980): 601–30.

Decline would later set in, and Scotland's economy and demography stagnated over the twentieth century. Here, *Internal Colonialism* offers insight from its roots in world-systems theory, but the economic core had shifted from London to Brussels and Washington.

Can Hechter's lens be adjusted one more time? Well, if launched from the union state, then the determination of a Unionist – not a Celtic – nationalism is explained. The medieval heroics of Wallace, Bruce, and the wars of independence were evoked to maintain civil and national liberties embedded in a nineteenth-century civil society enshrined by the central state and empowered by the local state.[145] Exactly two decades after *Internal Colonialism* was published, a multi-Oscar winning movie, *Braveheart* (1995), helped secure for Scotland a devolved parliament in 1999. The cultural memory of William Wallace was then roused a third time, in 2014, when by referendum the Scottish electorate voted by ten percentage points to remain in the Union with England.[146]

Should there soon be an independent Scotland, the SNP Scottish government has proposed a broad definition of citizenship that requires neither Scottish birth nor any level of Scottish identity, Celtic or otherwise.[147] Celticism, though, still carries popular tropes and banal symbolism. Gaelic is under threat in the classrooms, but benefits from a dedicated TV channel (BBC Alba) and College (Sabhal Mòr Ostaig), the Scottish parliament's translation service, and is displayed on emergency vehicles and railways stations to inculcate an everyday presence. The *Scottish Languages Act (2025)* gives equal official status to Gaelic and Scots and follows protections given to Ulster Scots and Irish in the *Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022*. Successive Scottish governments have admired – but have yet to match – the economic success of Ireland's 'Celtic tiger', the achievements of the Ireland Funds, and Ireland's diaspora strategy.[148] Such Celtic synergies are still broached, but Hechter taught us to look for determinants, not the carriers, of nationalism. The travails of British national development can be carefully drawn, and a change in embarkation point would better delineate Scotland's historic journey.

145. Graeme Morton, 'Civil Society, Municipal Government and the State: Enshrinement, Empowerment and Legitimacy, Scotland, 1800–1929', *Urban History*, 25.3 (1998), 348–67.

146. Graeme Morton, *William Wallace: A National Tale* (Edinburgh, 2014), 197–212.

147. Scottish Government, *Building a New Scotland: Citizenship in an Independent Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2023). https://www.gov.scot/publications/building-new-scotland-citizenship-independent-scotland/documents/

148. Delphine Ancien, Mark Boyle and Rob Kitchen, *The Scottish Diaspora and Diaspora Strategy: Insights and Lessons from Ireland* (Edinburgh, 2009). https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-diaspora-diaspora-strategy-insights-lessons-ireland/documents/

On Turning Inward: The Fertile Ground for Inside-Out Colonialism

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> *There is a natural tendency to consider relations between England and the Celtic regions as the result of the interplay of factors located solely within the British polity. The pattern of Celtic history may then be conceived to be insulated from events occurring elsewhere in the world. However this tendency must be resisted.*
>
> Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, p. 234.[149]

This opening passage to Chapter 8 of Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism* seems in many respects ahead of its time. It would be a quarter of a century before critiques of 'methodological nationalism' came into vogue, but Hechter's plain-speaking formula from 1975 said much the same thing.[150] As an outsider looking in, he brought a wider perspective to the endemic fissures and flaws that permeated British statehood. International comparisons came readily to him, just as his intellectual range and conceptual scaffolding (incorporating Geertz, Marx, Deutsch, Gramsci, Weber, Braudel, Gellner, Eisenstadt and a host of others) signalled a cosmopolitan disposition and aversion to national blinkers.

Yet in framing his subject as a study of 'internal' colonialism, he was nevertheless obliged to turn inward, devising sophisticated metrics for gauging the uneven distribution of social, economic and cultural capital among the UK's constituent parts. Though this yielded substantial dividends, it left unanswered the question of why his colonial analogy struck such a resonant chord. What was it about the mid-1970s that produced fertile ground, not just for a critique of the ailing prospects of the United Kingdom, but one that placed a presumptively 'offshore' phenomenon like Britain's decommissioned empire in the main frame?

Hechter was all too aware that he was writing at a time of burgeoning political separatism in Scotland and Wales (compounded by the spiralling sectarian violence in Northern Ireland). The dramatic by-election victories of the SNP and Plaid Cymru in the late 1960s brought a once marginal and much-maligned cause to the centre of British politics. The momentum persisted into the mid-1970s, producing a minority Labour government, a hung parliament, and an

149. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (London, 1975), 234.

150. Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, 'Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences', *Global Networks*, 2:4 (2002) 301–34.

emboldened separatist movement holding the balance of power. This was late 1974, just as *Internal Colonialism* was going to press; exquisite timing for an academic work seeking a wider audience.

Hechter devoted his penultimate chapter to explaining why, after decades of relative decline in 'peripheral sectionalism' (his shorthand for Celtic divergence from English patterns of electoral behaviour), the separatist parties had managed such a spectacular comeback. This 'surprising' development ran counter to his theoretical expectation that 'the social base for such movements would tend to disappear' in complex, literate, and highly integrated industrial societies with a shared language. 'Why do the nationalist parties gain strength in 1966?', he puzzled. 'More fundamentally, why is there no apparent correlation between the measure of peripheral sectionalism and the level of support for the nationalist parties?' He termed this 'the paradox of Celtic resurgence' – but it was largely a paradox of his own making.[151]

I want to posit an alternative paradox – one that flows directly from Hechter's keen eye for wider connections: at no point in the 300-odd pages of *Internal Colonialism* was any mention made of the contemporary remnants of the British empire. Hechter never construed the collapse of British colonialism abroad as a possible spur to the separatist revival at home. Nor did he reflect on how dismantling the outward imperial rigging might have exposed the internal iniquities at its core. The index of the book contains no reference to 'decolonization' generally nor its various iterations across Asia, Africa or the Caribbean. It seems a surprising omission from an author determined to resist screening out 'events occurring elsewhere in the world'.

Even more perplexing is the sole mention of imperial decline that appears on the second-last page. Rather than link this key context to the contemporary surge in political separatism, Hechter seemed to regard the two phenomena as wholly unconnected. It 'makes sense', he ventured, that internal colonialism should have 'survived the rise and fall of the most extensive overseas colonial empire in the history of the world', though he never really explained why.[152] But his emphasis was on the inner durability of the Union, rather than the external shocks that had presented such a rare opportunity for the separatist parties.

This seems a deliberate omission given the surfeit of public speculation along these very lines in 1975. Britain's diminished standing overseas had become a commonplace – and for some, irresistible – register for diagnosing all manner of domestic maladies, including the widening cracks in the Union.[153] As early as 1959, the Labour Party's John Strachey had raised the alarm about the potentially corrosive effects of imperial decline on the 'morale, the spirit, the mental health

151. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 300; 'surprising' on ibid., 264.
152. Ibid., 350.
153. See for example, *Times*, 18 April 1974; 24 September 1974.

even' of the British people. 'Now that the Empire is vanishing', he cautioned, 'we must prevent the "Balkanisation of Britain" at all costs'.[154]

Into the 1960s, political commentators and public moralists of all persuasions entered the fray. Margery Perham dedicated her BBC Reith Lectures in 1961 to what she termed 'The Colonial Reckoning' – invoking the moral legacies of empire as a potentially debilitating burden (one that she was at pains to dispel).[155] Others looked enviously at how their European neighbours had divested themselves of empire at a minimal psychological cost. The *Spectator*'s Anthony Hartley marvelled at how the Dutch in particular had successfully extricated themselves from 'colonial cares', compared with the 'narrowing of horizons and a sense of frustration' that prevailed in Britain.[156]

From a very early stage, separatist movements in Scotland and Wales (not to mention Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland) saw a strategic advantage in drawing these connections. At the 1960 Plaid Cymru Conference, the Party leadership celebrated a remarkable year for political independence sweeping through Africa, calling for a 'wind of change over Wales'.[157] The SNP also adopted overtly anti-colonial messaging in their 1960s campaign material, asking pointedly why 'the British Government can confer full nationhood so freely on former colonial peoples in Africa and Asia' without extending the same courtesy to 'ancient Scotland'.[158] Meanwhile, Ulster Unionists grew apoplectic at the prevalence of spurious analogies that posited Catholics 'as the "native" population of Ulster, with Protestants as colonial intruders'.[159]

Similar reasoning also found its way into scholarly debates. In the immediate aftermath of the SNP's remarkable victory at the Hamilton by-election of November 1967, Edinburgh University's Harry Hanham boiled the matter down to its essentials: 'Now that the Empire is dead, many Scots feel cramped and restricted at home'.[160] Tom Nairn's journey from arch-critic of SNP provincialism to a leading voice for Scottish independence was also shaped by the realisation that Scotland's 'subordination' to England had been 'a necessary condition of Britain's great power phase and imperial ambition'. Achieving 'desubordina-

154. John Strachey, *The End of Empire* (London, 1959), 204; Strachey quoted in Tam Dalyell, *Devolution: The End of Britain?* (London, 1977), 83.

155. Margery Perham, *The Colonial Reckoning* (London, 1961).

156. Anthony Hartley, *A State of England* (London, 1963); idem, 'An Impression of Holland: Freed from Colonial Cares', *Manchester Guardian*, 1 November 1958.

157. Reported in the *Daily Nation*, 31 July 1960.

158. Neil Douglas, *How London Spends your Money* (Edinburgh). Arthur Donaldson Papers, Acc. 6038/2, 'Correspondence of and to Arthur Donaldson', Folder 2, SNP Archives, National Library of Scotland.

159. 'More Home Truths', *News Letter* (Belfast) 14 February 1972.

160. H. J. Hanham, *Scottish Nationalism* (London, 1969), 212. See generally Jimmi Østergaard Nielsen and Stuart Ward, '"Cramped and Restricted at Home": Scottish Separatism at Empire's End', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 25 (2015), 159–85.

tion', he reasoned, had become 'an equally necessary accompaniment of that phase's end'.[161]

Michael Hechter viewed things very differently, ascribing the rapid upswing in the electability of the SNP and Plaid Cymru, not to some anti-colonial wave belatedly crashing onto Britain's shores, but to the conspicuous failure of both Conservative and Labour governments to invest in the 'peripheral' economy. He identified a 'profound shift in the legitimate rationale for regional autonomy' in the mid-1960s. What had once been couched in terms of an avowedly cultural (and indeed 'romantic') imperative for political selfhood in the late nineteenth century had evolved into a more utilitarian argument based on the 'the perception of regional economic distress' borne of metropolitan neglect.[162] For all his advocacy of a wide-angled lens, Hechter ultimately viewed the revival of the separatist cause precisely in terms of 'the interplay of factors located solely within the British polity'.

Which is not to say that Hechter was entirely mistaken, but his argument raises another paradox: the entrenched perception of Westminster's indifference to Scottish and Welsh prosperity emerged at a time of unprecedented wealth distribution to the regions. The newly established Welsh Office (1964) owed its very existence to the need to address these concerns, while in Scotland, the sense of alienation persisted despite accelerated Government investment in the North. T. M. Devine has calculated a 900 per cent increase in public expenditure in Scotland between 1964 and 1973, with new infrastructure projects, bridges, pits, smelters, and schools, leaving 'no part of Scotland … untouched'.[163] Yet this seemingly failed to rob separatist parties of a useful rhetorical tool.

The reason for this lies in the remarkable skill of the separatist movement in filtering perceptions of internal economic malaise through the wider prism of Britain's ailing fortunes abroad. Looking back on this period, former SNP leader Gordon Wilson recalled the blurred boundaries between actual economic disadvantage and a more generalised deflation of political morale. The key was to show how the end of empire had not only undermined the 'prestige and power of the British state' but also removed a major source of Scottish economic prosperity and opportunity.[164] An alternative variant of this (albeit a logically inconsistent one) stressed the wasteful burden of upholding great power pretensions overseas for the sake of English 'prestige', to the direct detriment of regional development.[165]

161. Tom Nairn, *After Britain: New Labour and the Return of Scotland* (London, 2000), 5–6.

162. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 301–3.

163. T. M. Devine, 'The Challenge of Nationalism' in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Scotland and the Union, 1707–2007* (Edinburgh, 2008), 148–9.

164. Gordon Wilson, *SNP: The Turbulent Years, 1960–1990* (Stirling, 2009), 247.

165. I have enlarged on this in Stuart Ward, *Untied Kingdom: A Global History of the End of Britain* (Cambridge, 2023), especially Chapters 13 and 14.

The timing of Hechter's magnum opus therefore offers a window into a distinct late-imperial moment that lent his whole framework heightened critical – and indeed emotional – purchase. *Internal Colonialism* appeared only a few months before the *Journal of Modern History* published J. G. A. Pocock's seminal 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject' in December of that year. Though widely divergent in terms of style, conception and argument, both were anchored in the same culture of introspection about the shaky future of the United Kingdom. Taken together, they fired the starting gun on what would become 'four nations history', seeking ways of reconfiguring Britain as a dynamic web of interactions between multiple kingdoms and peoples.

Unlike Hechter, Pocock saw the recent unravelling of empire as fundamental to his purpose. 'The British cultural star-cluster', he observed, 'is at present in a highly dispersed condition, various parts of it feeling the attraction of adjacent galaxies; the central giant has cooled, shrunk and moved away, and the inhabitants of its crust seem more than ever disposed to deny that the rest of us ever existed'.[166] The latter reference was pointedly meant for 'the English', whose studied indifference to the rest of the empire (including Pocock's native New Zealand) underlined the need to reimagine British history as a system of interlocking parts.

Hechter was no less a product of his time, but for whatever reason he never shared Pocock's acute sense of the impress of empire's end. Nor does he seem to have returned to these possibilities in later years. He came closest in one overtly comparative piece from 1979, in which he noted the temporal clustering of 'ethnoregionalism' across Asia, Africa, and Europe (where not just the UK but also France and Spain were grappling with emboldened separatist claims). 'There must', he opined, 'be an international dimension to the problem'.[167]

But only the fractured politics of breakaway movements in Asia and Africa could be linked directly to the recent ruptures of decolonisation. For the Europeans, Hechter found commonalities elsewhere, from the easing of Cold War tensions to the opening of the world economy, the rise of regional customs unions, and the 'internationalization of defence', all of which 'reduced in no small way the cost of ethnoregionalism in discontented peripheral areas'. Decolonisation was only raised as a factor that 'went hand in hand with a general lowering of barriers to international trade' (and hence the reduction of the 'cost' of political separatism) – rather than a combustible element in its own right with complex internal agencies.[168]

166. J. G. A. Pocock. 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject: Reply', *Journal of Modern History*, 47:4 (1975), 621.

167. Michael Hechter and Margaret Levi, 'The Comparative Analysis of Ethnoregional Movements', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2:3 (1979), 271.

168. Ibid., 271. Remarkably, John's Stone's editorial introduction was more forthcoming on the end of empire as a factor strengthening the appeal of micro-nationalism in Western Europe:

It never occurred to Hechter that the same crisis of legitimacy he identified among post-colonial states could not be quarantined offshore; nor that the broader political climate of anti-colonial nationalism that ushered scores of new states into the international system might have produced an opportune moment for ethnoregional minorities in Europe more generally. Yet this surely needs to be factored into the wider paradigm shift that not only enabled Hechter to see clearly the lineaments of 'internal colonialism' at work, but also ensured a ready audience for his findings – one that had become 'captive' (ironic as it may seem) to the romance of breaking free.

'Apart from providing inspiration for the analogy, classical colonialism may also have influenced the development of ethnonational sentiment in a more direct way … by reducing the material and occupational advantages from membership of the tradition (sic) European state'. John Stone, 'Introduction: Internal Colonialism in Comparative Perspective', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2:3 (1979), 256.

Internal Colonialism after European Integration

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The year in which *Internal Colonialism* was published was also the year of the United Kingdom's first referendum on membership of the European Economic Community. It was to be another forty years until the next would be held. The outcomes of the two were strikingly different: in 1975, 67% voted to remain in the European Community, compared to 48% in 2016.[169] What also changed dramatically in those four decades was the support for European membership in the 'Celtic fringe'. In 1975, Northern Ireland and Scotland were the most sceptical regions of the UK, voting 52% and 58% respectively to remain whilst 69% voted so in England. These positions switched in the 2016 referendum: 47% in England voted to remain compared to 56% in Northern Ireland and 62% in Scotland. The British Government's decision to take the UK-wide majority (thanks to the size of the English population) as the mandate to leave the European Union (EU) exacerbated centripetal tensions within the United Kingdom. Overall, I would argue, the UK Government's handling of Brexit[170] itself confirms the continued validity of the thesis of internal colonialism. This section of the roundtable will consider, by way of example, the continued dominance of the English market across post-Brexit Great Britain by the centre effectively curtailing the scope of devolution.

169. Nevertheless, the differentials by social class were notable similar across the referendums: the more advantaged social classes being the strongest supporters of European Community/Union membership. AB classes voted remain 85% in 1975 and 59% in 2016; C2/DE classes voted 64%/62% remain in 1975 and 38%/36% in 2016. See B. Clements, 'The Referendums of 1975 and 2016 Illustrate the Continuity and Change in British Euroscepticism', *LSE Policy Blog*, 31 July 2017, available from: https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2017/07/31/the-referendums-of-1975-and-2016-illustrate-the-continuity-and-change-in-british-euroscepticism/

170. The term 'Brexit' itself, of course, is contentious. Brendan O'Leary was particularly exercised by its implied ignorance of the impact of EU withdrawal on Northern Ireland but, despite his valiant efforts, the term 'UKEXIT' never caught on. See Brendan O'Leary, 'Now Brexit cannot mean UKEXIT – because the DUP won't Tolerate a Hard Border', *LSE Brexit Blog*, 13 June 2017, available from: https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2017/06/13/englands-difficulty-varadkars-opportunity/; John Garry, Brendan O'Leary, Kevin McNicholl and James Pow, 'The Future of Northern Ireland: Border Anxieties and Support for Irish Reunification under Varieties of UKexit', *Regional Studies*, 55.9 (2021), 1517–27.

European Integration and Devolution

First, it is worth considering why it is that Scotland and Northern Ireland moved to becoming that much more supportive of European integration than the rest of the UK over the course of EU membership. The relative scepticism of the two in 1975 is explained to some degree by Hechter's contemporaneous summation of the views of the SNP and Plaid Cymru.[171] He describes the nationalist parties' resistance to inclusion in the European Common Market as entwined with their challenge to the persistence of English domination. Their underlying assumption was that the economic development and diversification they sought would require self-determination. Contrary to their fears, however, European integration came to enhance regional development. This was, putting it very simply, in part through active EU initiatives (such as through the European Regional Development Fund) and in part through enacting the EU's principle of subsidiarity.[172] The benefits of the latter were not realised in the UK until the Labour Government devolved power from Westminster to legislatures in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales in 1998. This may be seen as justifying Hechter's prediction that any regime that addressed the effects of internal colonialism by transferring resources (or capacity) from the core to the periphery would be likely to be left-leaning.[173]

The deepening and broadening of the EU's regulatory regime, reflected in its expanding *aquis communautaire*, meant that policy- and law-making likely to have consequences for economic development was increasingly happening at the EU level. Thus, while the UK Government enjoyed some capacity to shape that EU policy, it was often translated into legislation and practice at a devolved level. It is for this reason that EU membership is viewed as having both enabled and contained greater autonomy for the regions and nations of the UK.[174] All four parts of the UK exercised decision-making powers within the shared framework of the Single European Market. The fact that Ireland was also in this market was also a necessary element for devolution in Northern Ireland.[175] In a scenario

171. Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (London, 1975), 305–6.

172. The principle of subsidiarity is set out in Article 5(3) of the Treaty on European Union that guides the sharing of competences for policy and law-making between authorities at sub-national, national and supra-national levels. Its effect is to have decisions taken at as close as possible level to those affected.

173. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 350. In Hechter's terms, this would be a socialist regime as distinct from a capitalist one. In reality, of course, the New Labour government would be more accurately described as the latter rather than the former. Nevertheless, the contrast with the Conservative Party's approach to devolution is enough to make this a valid observation.

174. Michael Keating, *State and Nation in the United Kingdom: The Fractured Union* (Oxford, 2021).

175. Katy Hayward, Peter Leary and Milena Komarova, 'The Irish Border as Sign and Source of British-Irish Tensions' in Natalia Ribas-Mateos and Timothy J. Dunn (eds) *Handbook on Human Security, Borders and Migration* (London, 2021), 357–72.

unimaginable to Hechter in 1975, the 'British Isles' came to be within broadly the same regulatory regime across significant policy areas.[176] Thus it was that, under EU membership, goods and services moved freely across the Irish border and the Irish Sea.

The reasons for the remain-voting majorities in Scotland and Northern Ireland in 2016 are multifarious.[177] At root is the notion that EU membership represented a dilution of sovereignty for England but an enhancement of autonomy for the Celtic nations.[178] Hechter may wish us to be cognisant of the relevance of cultural differences in the Brexit debate which, indeed, was conducted along themes of identity and values (particularly focused on immigration).[179] Of note here is how a resurgent English nationalism came to reassert itself through Brexit in ways that have seen renewed manifestations of internal colonialism.[180] By way of illustration, let us consider the UK Internal Market Act (2020) as a response by the UK Government to difficulties for trade across the UK arising from the approach it took to EU withdrawal.[181]

176. I acknowledge that there can be very different readings of this process of European integration – ones that would see continuity of, rather than challenge to, the effects of internal colonialism. For example, some would see the EU as actually rejuvenating the power of the core nation; e.g., Alan Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (London, 1992); or, as a new locus for colonising tendencies by core cultures. or as provoking a form of competitive regionalism that allows new disparities across Europe, see Jan Zielonka, *Europe as Empire: The Nature of the Enlarged European Union* (Oxford, 2006); John Loughlin, 'Conclusions: The Transformation of Regional and Local Democracy in Western Europe' in John Loughlin (ed.) *Subnational Democracy in the European Union: Challenges and Opportunities* (Oxford, 2001).

177. We should not neglect the fact that both the SNP and Sinn Féin only became overt supporters of EU membership *after* the referendum. Eve Hepburn and Peter J. McLoughlin, 'Celtic Nationalism and Supranationalism: Comparing Scottish and Northern Ireland Party Responses to Europe', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 13.3 (2010), 383–99; Jonathan Evershed and Mary C. Murphy, 'An bhfuil ár lá tagtha? Sinn Féin, Special Status and the Politics of Brexit', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 24.2 (2021), 243–58.

178. Katy Hayward, *Irish Nationalism and European Integration: The Official Redefinition of the Island of Ireland* (Manchester, 2009).

179. John Curtice, 'Why Leave Won the UK's EU Referendum', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 55.1 (2017), 19–37; Maria Sobolewska and Robert Ford, 'Brexit and Britain's Culture Wars', *Political Insight*, 11.1 (2020), 4–7.

180. The use by the British press and some politicians of cultural stereotypes of the Irish – most particularly when frustrated by the slow progress being made in the Brexit negotiations due to the need to address the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland – would be recognised by Hechter (Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 30) as a modern attempt to legitimise 'metropolitan subordination'. Fintan O'Toole has written at length on the manifestations of English nationalism in Brexit, including in the form of anti-Irish racism. See Fintan O'Toole, *Heroic Failure: Brexit and the Politics of Pain* (London, 2019); idem, *Three Years in Hell: The Brexit Chronicles* (London, 2020).

181. The Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement (2019) is highly relevant here. To keep the Irish land border open, Articles 5–10 of Protocol *de facto* keep Northern Ireland in the EU's customs union and single market for goods, meaning that checks and controls are required on goods entering the region from Great Britain. Katy Hayward and Milena Komarova, 'The Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland: Past, Present, and Future Precariousness', *Global Policy*, 13.2 (2022), 128–37. This means that the UK Internal Market Act (2020) has limited

The UK Internal Market Act

If EU membership enabled the UK to stay together despite some self-determination having been granted to its constituent parts, Brexit lifted boundaries that contained that autonomy. It brought the risk that a renewed scope for policy-making would lead not only to divergence but friction within the UK internal market. Cabinet Office analysis in 2019 revealed there to be 160 policy areas that had been given to the EU to legislate in and which were then enacted by the devolved institutions.[182] Many of these areas were not particularly contentious or significant, and were deemed possible to hold together by common frameworks adhered to across the UK by the agreement of the devolved administrations (for example, voting rights, water quality or maximum driver hours). However, this was not the case for areas of policy-making that were particularly valued by the devolved administrations, most notably in economic policy. Facing the prospect of new barriers to trade within the UK internal market, the UK government brought forward the UK Internal Market Bill, which became law in 2020.[183] The Act promotes the functioning of the UK internal market by establishing two UK 'market access principles': mutual recognition and non-discrimination.[184] Mutual recognition means that goods or services lawfully produced in or imported into one part of the UK can be lawfully sold or supplied across the UK, even if they do not comply with local regulatory requirements. Non-discrimination means that there can be no

impact on trade with Northern Ireland. It is worth noting that the British Government originally refused to acknowledge such limitations, going so far as to claim that the Bill would remove the formalities required by the Protocol on Great Britian to Northern Ireland trade and thus, deliberately and explicitly, 'break international law in a very specific and limited way'. Brandon Lewis, 'Northern Ireland Protocol: UK Legal Obligations', The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Answers to Urgent Questions, 8 September 2020, Hansard, vol.679, col.509, available from: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-09-08/debates/2F32EBC3-6692-402C-93E6-76B4CF1BC6E3/NorthernIrelandProtocolUKLegalObligations.

182. Cabinet Office, *Revised Frameworks Analysis: Breakdown of Areas of EU Law that Intersect with Devolved Competence in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland* (2019), available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/792738/20190404-FrameworksAnalysis.pdf.

183. It should be noted that, recognising concerns about the impact of the UK Internal Market Act on devolved powers, the new Labour UK Government conducted a review and public consultation exercise on it. The package of measures proposed in response to the results of these includes a promise to work more closely with devolved governments on matters relating to the internal market. Department of Business and Trade (2025) *UK Government Response to the Review of the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 and Public Consultation* (2025), 7. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/686fa10e2cfe301b5fb679d0/uk-government-response-to-the-review-of-the-united-kingdom-internal-market-act-2020-and-public-consultation.pdf.

184. Hechter exposes how the application of criteria in economic policy held to be 'universalistic' can be wholly in the interests of the core over the periphery. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 310.

favourable treatment of local goods or services over those regulated in another part of the UK. This narrows the territorial scope of devolved legislation and may 'have the effect of rendering attempts at distinctive local regulation by the devolved institutions ineffective'.[185] In practice, these market access principles are evidently to the benefit of England, given its competitive advantage and its law-makers' wish at the time (under a Conservative government) to diverge from EU regulations (in contrast to those in Wales and Scotland). The Act thus compounds the asymmetry of the Union rather than mitigating it.

This example resonates all too well with Hechter's discussion of the ways in which internal colonialism limits the capacity for economic policy. He argues that 'the loss of Celtic sovereignty' must be considered in light of the fact that state protection is needed for economic diversification – and most particularly away from dependency on the core.[186] The crushing (to use his term) of Scottish native manufacturers after 1707 and the ruin of Irish industry after 1801 is, Hechter claims, because the Union removed the capacity of the Scottish and the Irish to erect trade barriers for their protection.[187] Open competition with English industry, combined with a lack of political autonomy, was to have devastating long-term economic consequences for Ireland and Scotland. Some three centuries later, outwith the wider framework of European integration, using the asymmetry of the Union to ensure that development in the periphery is 'complementary to that of the metropolis' was an easy recourse for the UK Government once more.[188] 'Protecting the UK's internal market' after Brexit meant, in practice, ensuring not only an economic but a political privilege for English goods and services. No wonder, then, that the UK Internal Market Act was viewed with alarm by devolved governments as a 'smash and grab' on the devolution

185. Michael Dougan, Katy Hayward, Jo Hunt, Nicola McEwen, Aileen McHarg and Daniel Wincott, *UK Internal Market Bill, Devolution and the Union* (Centre on Constitutional Change, UK in a Changing Europe, Wales Governance Centre, 2020), 7. Available from: https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/2468038/UK-INTERNAL-MARKET-BILL,-DEVOLUTION-AND-THE-UNION-4.pdf.

Also relevant is the fact that the UK Internal Market Act itself is a protected enactment, which the devolved legislatures are unable to repeal or modify. Worse, the UK Parliament *is* able to override the market access principles when legislating for England, as Dougan et al, *UK Internal Market Bill, Devolution and the Union*, 7 note. Accordingly, the Act has 'an inherently asymmetrical effect' within the UK, 'whereas EU law had a symmetrical effect on the UK Parliament and devolved legislatures'.

186. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 92.

187. Ibid., 93. We might bear the footnote above in mind when we consider Hechter's contention that, 'Whenever a specific English interest group mobilized enough Parliamentary support it could effectively legislate protection in [sic] its behalf'. Ibid., 93.

188. Ibid., 30.

settlement itself.[189] Just as 'the unification of the British Isles represented a loss of Celtic sovereignty', so withdrawal from the European Union meant a retraction of power back to the rapacious core.[190]

189. As described by then Welsh First Minister Mark Drakeford; see Elliot Chappell, 'Drakeford Slams Internal Markets Bill as "Smash and Grab" on Devolution', Labour List, 9 September 2020, available from: https://labourlist.org/2020/09/drakeford-slams-internal-markets-bill-as-smash-and-grab-on-devolution/ More recently, Deputy First Minister of Scotland, Kate Forbes reiterated the disappointment that the new Labour Government would not repeal the UK Internal Market Act: 'Neither the Scottish Parliament nor any of the other devolved legislatures gave their consent to the Act. It has introduced radical uncertainty as to the effect of devolved laws, effectively introducing a far-reaching and unpredictable new constraint on the powers of the Scottish Parliament. It also provides UK Ministers with an open-ended power effectively to nullify laws passed by a democratically elected – and accountable – legislature.' Kate Forbes, 'Internal Market Act must be Repealed', Press Release by the Scottish Government on the Scottish Government Position Paper on the Internal Market Act 2020, 3 April 2025, available from: https://www.gov.scot/news/internal-market-act-must-be-repealed/

190. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 68.

Why Internal Colonialism?

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Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism* was published 1975 just as the surprise revival of peripheral nationalism was provoking a revision of the accepted view (at least in England) of the United Kingdom as a uniquely homogeneous polity. It is a sustained critique of modernist, assimilationist, diffusionist models of national development and (although Hechter does not mention it) of complacent, Anglo-Centric Whig histories. Following Stein Rokkan, it traces integration on the lines of culture, economics, and politics.[191] These findings are now broadly accepted, as is the idea that territorial differentiation is not merely a legacy of the past but is reproduced in industrial and post-industrial societies. Hechter is also to be commended for the ambition of the enterprise and for bringing much-needed conceptualisation, theorisation and quantitative evidence to bear on the experience of the United Kingdom, and in recognising its significance without just dismissing it as *sui generis*.

The big question is why this should be described as colonialism, what that adds to our understanding and whether this is the only alternative to diffusionist models. The idea of internal colonialism originated with Gramsci in Italy but Hechter takes it via Latin America and *dependencia* theory back to the UK. In fact, the theory had already been taken up by left-wing peripheral nationalists in Europe, notably by Robert Lafont (1967) who, starting with Occitania, inspired nationalists in other French regions, the Basque Country, Galicia and beyond from the 1960s in the context of decolonisation.[192] This allowed regionalism and peripheral nationalism to move to the post-1968 libertarian and decentralising new left. The idea has resonance in Ireland, where the history does support it but appears to have arrived in Wales only after the appearance Hechter's book.[193] It has very little traction in Scotland. It is essentially a political concept; indeed in the 1980s Lafont told me that its application to Occitania was largely opportunistic, coming out of the Algerian war. Algeria was officially part of France but was really a colony, so why not other regions?

In Hechter, colonialism is never adequately defined or operationalised, except at a very general level as ethnic division of labour. Hechter recognises that ethnicity is a difficult concept but is sometimes hard to see whether it is

191. Although Rokkan's contribution is seriously underplayed.
192. Robert Lafont, *La révolution régionaliste* (Paris, 1967).
193. See Martin Johnes, *Wales: England's Colony* (Cardigan, 2017) for a recent application.

ethnicity or territory that is doing the work of differentiation. Nor does he define what is meant by Celts and, in the case of Scotland, he slips between seeing the whole country as Celtic and confining that to the Highlands. Indeed, as the book proceeds, Scotland conforms less and less to the model.

The first part of the book is an ambitious historical review of the making of the United Kingdom. Hechter acknowledges that he is not a historian and it would be pointless to quibble over the details except for one item that bears on the critical issue of culture. Hechter writes that 'the universal education act had been passed for Britain, ensuring that free education would be carried on in English and English alone'.[194] In fact, Welsh medium education was never prohibited by law. There was no all-Britain education act; Scotland had its own act, which did not prohibit Gaelic. The rise of English was mainly a result of demands by parents.

A bigger problem is the Marxian materialist framework into which the history has been fitted, at the cost of some inconsistency. The unions gave the peripheral nations access to UK and imperial markets and prohibited them from adopting protectionism but, rather than progressive integration, both aspects seem to be written down as colonialism. There is an underlying assumption that peripheral nationalism must be the product of deprivation, whereas there is evidence that it thrives when the peripheral nations are relatively prosperous and are therefore more able to manage on their own.[195] When faced with the fact that the centre had been putting money into the periphery since the 1960s to help them catch up but nationalism had increased regardless, Hechter suggests that the peripheries were disappointed with the poor results but the only evidence comes from complaints from Scottish and Welsh nationalists who could hardly say otherwise.

A surprising omission, except for a reference to anti-imperialism, is the experience of Empire. This matters for two reasons. First, it would show what colonialism really looks like. Second, the United Kingdom was built simultaneously as a state, an empire and a monarchy in which the various parts had different relationships to the centre and cultural homogeneity was not required. The emerging peripheral nationalisms of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (with the exception of Irish republicans) tended to see the Empire and, later Commonwealth as a potential framework for political autonomy but this was a matter of identifying themselves with the 'White Dominions' rather than with the colonies. Peripheral nationalists showed sympathy for the Boers at the time of the Boer war but not for the indigenous African population. Sionaidh Douglas Scott has recently traced the complex inter-relationships of home and

194. Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536–1966* (London, 1975), 204.

195. Michael Keating, *State and Nation in the United Kingdom: The Fractured* Union (Oxford, 2021).

imperial government and constitutionalism.[196] Although at the end of the book, Hechter presents colonies and regions as on a spectrum, this does not inform the analysis as a whole and looks more like an attempt to rescue the argument. Several European states have imperial fragments in overseas territories, as does the UK with the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands, Gibraltar and the Falklands, but they too are not to be confused with the oppressed and subordinated colonies of Africa and Asia.

The second part of the book is a statistical analysis of differentiation across the nations, the methodology of which was subject to a comprehensive critique by a then Masters student, now a professor at the London School of Economics, Edward C. Page. Page's article is required reading for anybody who is using Hechter and I will confine myself to a few remarks.[197] The statistical analysis was based upon ecological data, that is figures applying to collective units rather than to individuals. Hechter does acknowledge the problems with this, but that is how the data were available so the choice may be defensible. The unit of analysis however, is the county, since the data were not available by nation. More seriously, to get the national averages, Hechter averages out the county means without weighting for the very different sizes of the counties. This builds in a bias that favours small rural counties, distorting some of the key variables. Further difficulties are created by treating England as a single unit and, at best, sifting out industrial and rural areas as a whole. This misses out significant intra-England cultural variations such as non-conformist religion, used as a key variable in inter-nation variation.[198]

To measure political variation, Hechter uses the size of the Conservative vote, which serves as a proxy for the British or integrationist vote as opposed to the cultural sectionalist one. The rationale is that the Conservative Party 'has since the nineteenth century been closely identified with the traditional leadership of London and the home counties as well as the Crown and the Church of England itself. Thus, its traditional role has been to represent the core against any possibility of regional evolution or autonomy'.[199] While superficially plausible, this ignores the variability of Conservatism itself. Northern Ireland Unionism is a very different creature from English Conservatism. Scottish Conservatism long embraced a working-class Protestant Unionist element. On the other side, parties of the left, while having strong territorial bases, were for most of the time integrationist rather than autonomist.

196. Sionaidh Douglas Scott, *Brexit, Union, and Disunion: The Evolution of British Constitutional Unsettlement* (Cambridge, 2024).

197. Edward C. Page, 'Michael Hechter's Internal Colonialism Thesis. Some Theoretical and Methodological Problems,' *European Journal of Political Science*, 6 (1978), 295–317.

198. We might expect high levels of non-conformism in the Pennine valleys and the south-west of England.

199. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, 211.

The analysis proceeds in chapters, which could have served (and in some cases have) as standalone articles. This creates series of arguments that never quite come together as a whole. So Hechter measures economic inequalities, controls for levels of industrialisation and then tentatively attributes the residual variation to ethnicity and prejudice. There is an analysis of religious diversity and the decline of peripheral languages, but it is rather inconclusive. Servitor imperialism (working-class support for Empire because it makes them better off than other peoples) is measured by electoral support for Conservative and Liberal Imperialist candidates as the residual when other factors have been controlled for. Yet Conservative votes are used in the preceding chapter as the residual that measures the 'peripheral sectional' (nationalist vs unionist) vote attributable to cultural factors. The latter measure also included London in the list of 'sectional' counties, while the Scottish counties seem to be evenly distributed. These two chapters earlier appeared as separate articles but one might have expected them to be reconciled for the book.

Scotland never quite seems to fit into the analysis. In 1985, Hechter adapted his analysis by effectively turning the theory on its head as regards Scotland.[200] This is a familiar move in studying the United Kingdom, as with the analyses of Finer (1974) and Blondel (1974) who argued, more or less, that the United Kingdom was a homogeneous state except where it was not.[201] Later, Linda Colley's *Britons* (1992) emphasises Protestant religion and war with France but only at the price of missing out Ireland.[202]

Colonialism, as Hechter would concede, is a contested concept and an ideal type. We might reasonably conclude that Ireland fits many of its key features – conquest, economic dependency, direct rule, settlement and discrimination – although the Irish were represented in the central Parliament. Wales is a case of administrative absorption with continuing cultural differentiation. The colonial argument does not fit Scotland at all but might have some relevance in the Highlands, if the colonisers are the native landowning class together with social and political elites in the Lowlands. As I try to explain to sympathetic Americans, the reason Scots get so riled at the suggestion that we (our ancestors) were colonised and oppressed by the English is that we were perfectly capable of doing the job for ourselves! More seriously, many Scots feel that the comparison trivialises the brutality of real colonialism. In recent years, the dominant narrative has been that Scots were among the worst of imperialists and slavers.

200. Michael Hechter, 'Internal colonialism revisited' in Edward A. Tiriakian and Ronald Rogowski (eds), *New Nationalisms of the Developed World* (London, 1985), 17–26.

201. Samuel Finer, Comparative Government (Harmondsworth, 1974); Jean Blondel, *Voters, Parties, and Leaders. The Social Fabric of British Politics* (Harmondsworth, 1974).

202. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (London, 1992).

Hechter's *longue durée* history might be read alongside Anglo-centric Conservative Jim Bulpitt's *Territory and Power in the United Kingdom* (1983), where (in another form of reductionism) it is all about raw political power and elite control.[203] Other accounts emphasise security and protection of the frontiers. Alvin Jackson's *The Two Unions* (2012) eschews parsimonious theorising for detailed empirical work, arguing that the unions were constructed according to the needs of the times without a clear over-riding purpose.[204] The United Kingdom, as Richard Rose wrote long ago, is an intellectual puzzle.[205] Some of us are still trying to work it out in the wider context of 'these islands' and of Europe but a puzzle it remains.[206]

203. James Bulpitt, *Territory and Power in the United Kingdom. An Interpretation* (Manchester, 1983).

204. Alvin Jackson, *The Two Unions. Ireland, Scotland and the Survival of the United Kingdom, 1707–2007* (Oxford, 2012).

205. Richard Rose, *Understanding the United Kingdom. The Territorial Dimension in Government* (London, 1982).

206. Keating, *State and Nation in the United Kingdom*; Paul Gillespie, Michael Keating and Nicola McEwen (eds), *Political Change across Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh, 2025).

Hechter's Spectres: *Internal Colonialism* and Race

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When *Internal Colonialism* was first published in 1975, reviewers were dumbfounded.[207] Many simply refused to take the argument seriously. Others were convinced by Hechter's overall account of how Celtic culture survived industrialisation, but were puzzled by the intricacy of his method and the conclusions he derived from it. In *New Society*, Daniel Jenkins, Reader in Religious Studies and Chaplain at Sussex University noted that Hechter's statistics 'may have a technical interest for professional sociologists but, as an attempt to explain relations between the various peoples who make up Britain, it is defeated by the complexity and subtlety of the material with which it has to deal.'[208] By contrast, the political scientist A. N. Birch was exercised less by Hechter's statistics and more by his charges of English racism 'both personal and institutionalized, towards the Scots, Welsh, and Irish'. Against these claims, Birch reminded his readers that Britain had had one Welsh and four Scottish Prime Ministers. 'There may be English racism of the kind Mr Hechter suggests', Birch concluded, 'but it is not immediately obvious and he does not produce any evidence to establish it'.[209]

In many respects, these reactions illustrate how left-leaning scholars in Britain were reacting to 'theory', especially how it seemed, on one hand, to obscure common sense and, on another, to compromise the solidarity, hope, and progress that many feared were being 'deconstructed' not just by the Thatcher right, but also by the Althusser left.[210] Michael Hechter was neither a Thatcherite nor an Althusserian, and *Internal Colonialism* often betrays his skepticism toward statistical data and theoretical abstraction. Behind this skepticism, though, there

207. Research for this essay was supported by an Insight Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Enormous thanks to my research assistant, Vincent Steinfeld, for help and conversation. My thanks also to Michael Brown and Anthony Jarrells for the invitation to contribute to this forum.

208. Daniel Jenkins, 'The Colonies Within,' *New Society*, 10 July 1975, 85.

209. A. N. Birch, 'The Celtic Fringe in Historical Perspective', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 29.2 (1976), 232.

210. This reaction is best exemplified by E. P. Thompson who, since the 1950s, had been calling on left-leaning thinkers to abandon structuralist jargon and return to a thoroughly contextualised, socially-conscious, and politically-engaged mode of history writing. See especially E. P. Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory, or an Orrery of Errors' in idem, *The Poverty of Theory* (London, 1978), 1–210.

is something affecting, even disturbing, that the reviewers felt could threaten the left's political integrity. Birch sensed it in Hechter's 'emotional terminology', words like 'assimilation' and 'racism'. But it is more than words: it is an energy or movement that emerges from peoples' realisation that they are being exploited by colonial, national, or capitalist systems. To misquote Marx, a spectre is haunting *Internal Colonialism*—the spectre of race.

Fifty years later, we are used to discussing the histories, impacts, and experiences of colonialism in the academy and race and racism are, to be sure, crucial parts of those stories. Already by 1999, when Transaction published its second edition, *Internal Colonialism* had come to be regarded not as a work of British history but as a paradigm of colonial studies – a field that grew up in its wake. Hechter's method was used to study responses to settler-colonialism in, for instance, Alaska.[211] Thanks mainly to the work of Robert Blauner, whom Hechter cites, 'internal colonialism' already had a profile in African-American studies as a catch-all term for various forms of systemic inequality in US cities.[212] Hechter himself, as he explains in 'Internal Colonialism Revisited,' had moved on from what he called 'nationalism' to consider, via rational choice theory, why individuals decide to belong to ethnic communities, especially in response to the presence of 'alien rulers' within even small regions of a larger national or imperial state.[213] Looking back in the Transaction introduction, Hechter somewhat dismissively described *Internal Colonialism* as the product of a 'cultural landscape' of generational schism that he, and Sociology generally, had outgrown. It was 'a product of its time', inspired by the 1968 student strikes at Columbia University, where he was a graduate student, 'against the university's imperial disposition toward the adjacent African-American community Harlem, and its purported complicity in the Vietnam War. The element that united these otherwise disparate concerns was racism, both domestic and international'. Hechter then compares the strike to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, the

211. Kathleen Ritter, 'Internal Colonialism and Industrial Development in Alaska', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 2.3 (1979), 319–30.

212. For a useful overview, see Charles Pinderhughes, 'Towards a New Theory of Internal Colonialism', *Socialism and Democracy*, 25.1 (2011), 235–56. On Blauner see ibid., 245–7; Robert Blauner, 'Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt', *Social Problems*, 16.4 (1969), 393–408. Hechter discusses Blauner in *Internal Colonialism* in the long footnote on page 33. As Blauner, Pinderhughes, and Hechter all note, the term 'Internal Colonialism' dates to the late nineteenth century and it was 'later adopted by Gramsci, Lenin, Preobarzhensky, and Bukharin', as well as W. E. B. Dubois. See Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (London, 2017), xiii–xiv.

213. Michael Hechter, 'Internal Colonialism Revisited' in Edward B. Tiryakian and Roger Rogowski (eds), *New Nationalisms of the Development West* (London, 1985), 17–26. On Hechter's use of Rational Choice Theory as a basis for a theory of social participation see Michael Hechter, *Principles of Group Solidarity* (Berkeley, 1987).

Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, 'political assassinations and inner city race riots', 'Abbie Hoffman' and 'the movie *Hair*'.[214]

The book's original Preface was more fulsome. In it, Hechter compares the conflict between English and Celtic Britain pointedly to 'problems of social change in contemporary American society' and especially with 'problems of ethnic conflict and assimilation' surrounding education, welfare, and crime.[215] He then narrates the evolution of the Black civil rights movement from an 'assimilationist' hope for equality to a 'radical separation of Blacks from white society and culture', spearheaded by Malcolm X and later by the Blank Panthers. He then charts a similar transition in the works of Frantz Fanon from *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) to *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and finally to the Columbia University strike, during which the Black protesters asked white students 'to set up their own occupation' in a different building. Through these examples, Hechter suggests that the different versions of Black identity within the Civil Rights Movement that the assimilationist and nationalist positions entailed were ideological and thus fluid and dynamic. The argument of *Internal Colonialism* likewise concerns the way that the Scots, Irish, and Welsh reacted to their dispossession by accepting – or not – various ethnic identities and political positions. His argument is really two: (1) the denial of 'sovereignty' within particular *regions* of nations states results in a 'cultural division of labour'[216]; and (2) *individuals* either adopt or defy this economic stratification by activating various modes of group or ethnic solidarity. But whereas the first argument could be tracked through historical narratives, the second was enigmatic and hard to gauge. It is telling, Hechter says, that while 'the first argument received much (albeit negative) attention, most commentators hardly reacted to this second one'.[217]

It is also telling that, throughout the book, Hechter uses analogies between Celtic Britain and Black America to track the 'racist' effects of modern industrialism and struggles to turn this analogy into a definitive account of Celtic ethnicity. In the opening theoretical chapters, Hechter introduces the guiding concept of the book, 'the cultural division of labour', which he defines as a 'stratification system' that 'assigns individuals to specific roles in the social structure on the basis of objective cultural distinctions'.[218] In chapter five, in one of the few remarks about racism that is in the book's index, Hechter compares this structure in Britain to institutional racist configurations elsewhere:

214. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, xiii.
215. Ibid., xxvi.
216. Ibid., xv.
217. Ibid., xv.
218. Ibid., 39.

> the situation of the Celtic fringe in the British Isles is analogous in several respects to that of the less developed countries in the world system. Development occurred in a largely dependent mode and created dualistic structures … As a consequence the spatial diffusion of industrialization in the Celtic lands was considerably restricted. Further, production in Wales, Scotland, and Ireland was excessively specialized, whereas England alone developed a diversified industrial economy … The institutionalization of these systematic disadvantages may partially result from the institutionalization of politics which have the effect of discriminating against the Celtic periphery in a manner similar to that which has been described as institutionalized racism.[219]

In the book's final chapters, Hechter attempts to record how the Celtic periphery responded to that institutional racism by examining voting behaviour in Scotland, Wales, and Ireland from the 1880s to the 1960s. This is where the statistics seem to fail him. He defines ethnicity in chapter 10 as 'the sentiments which bind individuals into solidarity groups on some cultural basis', something that '*alludes* to the quality of relations existing between individuals sharing certain cultural behaviors'.[220] Hechter then suggests that the existence of such sentiments and relations can only be concluded 'if reservations about the quality of these data are temporarily suspended'.[221] In the end, Hechter denies that the repudiations 'of structural discrimination' are merely expressions of 'traditional or primordial sentiment. On the contrary,' he goes on, 'such solidarity represents high political consciousness on the part of groups seeking to alter the cultural division of labor'.[222] But in what that solidarity actually consists, Hechter again finds very difficult to explain.

As frustrating as these analogies and hesitations are, they are what demonstrates the distinctively spectral qualities of race in *Internal Colonialism*. Like Hechter's argument, race is really two things: a set of structural conditions put in place by colonial capitalism and an 'orientation,' as Sara Ahmed argues, through which one lives in or with those conditions.[223] Indeed, the doubleness of race animates Critical Race Theory. Race is in one perspective a property that, in a Kantian sense, means both the qualities of a thing and the fact of it being owned by someone who is not, by that same definition, reducible to qualities. In a famous 1993 article, Cheryl Harris named this property 'whiteness' and ear-

219. Ibid., 130.
220. Ibid., 312 (emphasis added).
221. Ibid., 339.
222. Ibid., 340.
223. Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham NC, 2006).

marked it in the intangible confidence that white people 'have' or 'own' and that thus paradoxically constitutes their privilege as the only true subjects. 'Race' thus signifies a difference between subjectivity and non-subjectivity that in the American courts from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries validated the appropriation of Indigenous land and enslaved Africans. To underline this difference, Harris used Jeremy Bentham's definition of property in his *Theory of Legislation* (1802) as 'an expectation of security', the idea that I am secure in my relationship with the world (that exists for me) in a way that the 'savage' can never be.[224] At the same time, 'ethnic' signs used to justify these biases can be reappropriated to martial the transferential energies of mutual identification accrued over centuries of shared trauma. For Stuart Hall, race is an unstable or 'sliding signifier' born of the accumulated experience of social exclusion and cultural memory that fluctuates across various applications and attenuations.[225] In Hortense Spiller's incisive formulation, the '"ethnicity" that contemporary critical discourses neither acknowledge nor discourse away' manifests itself phenomenologically in 'concentrated' form as 'the flesh', the accumulation in the body of hardship and trauma that finds expression in common (though also frequently gendered) relations and associations, in contrast to 'the [captive] body', which Spillers says 'brings into focus a gathering of social realities as well as a metaphor for value'.[226]

In comparing Hechter to these Critical Race theorists, I am not suggesting that Celtic experience is in any way the same as Black American or indeed Indigenous experience. Indeed, the Celtic experience is still rarely discussed in terms of race. This is partly because Irish and Scottish people 'look' white. Indeed, Hechter stated as much in the 1975 Preface: 'the particular groups and historical conditions' he discusses 'are very different from those of twentieth-century America. For one thing, the conflicting "ethnic" groups in the British Isles, that is to say Anglo-Saxons and Celts, cannot be differentiated by *color*'.[227] Given the normativity of white identity in European and American culture to make claims of racial identity might feel downright strange – which may well be what offended Hechter's early critics. But it is precisely the instability, the spectrality, of Celtic identity – is it a race or something else? – that makes the internal colonialism thesis compelling. On one hand, Hechter recalls, 'racism came to full flower' in nineteenth-century Britain and he cites the historian Charles Kingsley

224. Cheryl Harris, 'Whiteness as Property', *Harvard Law Review*, 106.8 (1993), 1707–91. On Bentham, see ibid., 1729.

225. Stuart Hall, 'Race—the Sliding Signifier' in Stuart Hall, *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation*, Kobena Mercer (ed.) (Cambridge MA, 2017), 31–79.

226. Hortense Spillers, 'Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book', *Diacritics*, 17.2 (1987), 67–8.

227. Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, xxviii.

calling the Irish 'human chimpanzees' to prove it.[228] On another, it is hard to forget that the history of Celtic dispossession also features horrific accounts of Highland soldiers committing genocidal atrocities and of Gaelic-speaking settlers owning slaves. The idea that such ambivalences are products of economic agendas does not mean that race 'does not exist' or is a 'social construction'. Rather, it means that race entails a 'paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body … some "thing" that remains difficult to name: neither soul nor body and both one and the other'.[229] It is this spectre, not of Communism, but of race, that haunts *Internal Colonialism.*

228. Ibid., xxvi.

229. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, Peggy Kamuf (ed.) (London, 1994), 4.