Michael Lynch has argued that a ‘politics of “semi-independence”’ marked the period from 1707 to 1832, with Scotland essentially continuing to arrange its domestic affairs through the patronage and networks of its national and local elites. Subsequently, a Victorian tendency to greater British centralization and standardization was counterbalanced by the growth in the ideology of imperial localism, an ‘equipoise, in which loyalties to both a reawakened sense of Scottish nationhood and the Empire had kept the British state at arm’s length’. Worldwide Britishness, extending not only to the four home nations but also to settler colonies like Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa, was itself the codified reflection of a vision of an international ideal which developed markedly during the Victorian period:

The imperial/international/institutional theme of parliamentary sovereignty and Protestant destiny which had dominated the representation of England in a previous age was still powerful, but began increasingly to be used for export, to confirm the ‘Britishness’ of disparate colonies and their societies, by emphasizing the provision of a visible and also metaphorical framework of common law, diplomacy, government and military authority as the binding skein in a patchwork of colourful localisms.

If Britishness was to be the dominant, international feature of all the settler colonies, and one shared intermittently by the elites of southern Asia (and even by ‘The Guides at Cabul’ in Sir Henry Newbolt’s poem, who though ‘an alien legion’, teach true values to the ‘Sons of the Island
Race\(^3\), they were also to be permitted the counterweight of their own localisms as a balance. For Canada and Australia, among others, this meant Home Rule; for Ireland and Scotland, held more closely in the embrace of Parliamentary sovereignty’s inexhaustible claims, it did not. Nonetheless, Scottish imperial localism was a major and important part of Scottish identity: a limited and selective iconization of Scottish history provided a sense of the country’s worthiness to be a partner in a Union of which even Wallace and Bruce were seen as avatars. This was ‘Unionist Nationalism’, a term argued for and defined in Graeme Morton’s *Unionist-Nationalism* (1999).\(^4\)

In 1827, the ‘management of Scottish civil society was effectively ended by Canning… Scottish affairs were then entrusted to the Home Office, although in practice it was the Lord Advocate who controlled matters.’ This was one point which can be taken as the beginning of the process whereby Westminster centralism began to impose itself on Scotland in the place of political management by a local elite, developing, as the century progressed, a new set of centralizing institutions which continued to draw power away from Scotland even in the context of administrative devolution, such as that of the Scottish Office in 1885 – at this stage, it must be remembered, based in London. Eventually, however, as Morton argues, the shift away from the control of Scottish society by an elite allowed the growth of mass politics and end-of-the-century pressure for Home Rule.\(^5\) This was naturally abetted, as Michael Fry points out, by the introduction in 1868 of universal male suffrage.\(^6\)

Scottish particularism had its limits strictly set, like that of many colonies. Scots whose Scottishness was regarded as excessive, intrusive or making special national claims were ridiculed through the same kind of ‘squabbling-children-saved-from barbarity-by-British civilization’ discourse as that applied to India (or indeed Ireland). Ethnocultural and locally colourful Celticism was tolerated, sometimes encouraged, but not claims for space in the body politic: Scottish difference was ‘imprisoned in the body itself, the British body whose integrated genetic inheritance parallels its integrative polity’.\(^7\) This, among other facets of the country’s history, has led some commentators to argue that Scotland was fully part of the cycle of colonial oppression/postcolonial emergence, which has been in recent years such an important discourse in describing the literary and cultural expression related to the coalescence and dissolution of the great European empires. Michael Hechter’s *Internal Colonialism* (1975) was arguably the first book to put this case fully, arguing for a commonality of experience among the Celtic nations based, among