Master's Thesis Project

Cover page for the master's thesis

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Supervisor: Casper Sylvest	**Department:** History

Title, Danish: Mod en Brexistentiel krise? En kritisk tilgang til britisk identitetspolitik under Brexit med fokus på decentralisering og skotsk nationalisme	
Title, English: Towards a Brexistential Crisis? A Critical Approach to British Identity Politics on Brexit in the Context of Scottish Nationalism and Devolution	

Min./Max. number of characters: 144,000 – 192,000 (60 – 80 normal pages) (1 norm page = 2400 characters incl. blank spaces)	**Number of characters in assignment[1]:** 191,878 units (79.9 normal pages) Abstract: 4534 units (1.9 normal pages)

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[1] Characters are counted from the first character in the introduction until and including the last character in the conclusion. Footnotes are included. Charts are counted with theirs characters. The following is excluded from the total count: abstract, table of contents, bibliography, list of references, appendix. For more information, see the examination regulations of the course in the curriculum.

Abstract

The United Kingdom's 2016 referendum to leave the European Union is in no uncertain terms one of the most identity politically charged events in the history of modern Britain, on par with the 2014 Scottish IndyRef. Not only has Brexit set up the UK's perhaps most divisive political agenda for decades, it has also exacerbated the pre-existing disconnections between the dominant unitary interests of the UK state and the devolved concerns in the nations, not least because Scotland, flanked by Northern Ireland, voted to remain by decisive margins. Hence, Brexit is arguably not the British phenomenon that the UK Government has made it to be.

The current thesis takes this prompt to challenge the Anglo-British mindsets that animate both Brexit, if not UK politics altogether, and research on the Union. It builds on the premise that, despite having received relatively less attention from mainstream political scientists compared to the UK-wide Leave-Remain divide, the often-neglected devolved divergencies reveal underlying internal tensions that make it necessary to (re)theorise the UK's contemporary character in light of its changing politics of devolution and Scottish nationalism. This entails departing from dominant conceptions of a theoretical one-size-fits-all approach that favours a unitary one-nation state narrative to a pluralist framework that embraces the devolved realities and the plural historical, political and identity dimensions of the UK's four nations. Such framework reveals that that deeply rooted conflicts between the British state and the devolved Scottish nation over Brexit and beyond have been ignited by and are intricately linked to the UK's historical and political nation/state fault lines.

Utilising a methodological approach that is marked by the principles of the discourse-historical approach to critical discourse analysis (e.g. Wodak et al., 1999), the thesis develops a theoretical critique of the widespread legitimisation of Brexit as a British phenomenon at the intersection of an empirical analysis of the Conservatives' and the Scottish National Party's discursive framings of Brexit and the IndyRef in relation to their perceived sense of nationhood. This comes together in a discussion

about the future of UK politics in relation to the ongoing (identity) political and constitutional crisis, of which Brexit is symptomatic.

Some striking theoretical and empirical overlaps are revealed in the analysis, suggesting that the dominant academic focus on Brexit as a British phenomenon resonates with and, in part, reproduces the unitary one-nation political discourse by the UK Government. Hence, where Britain is assumed to be a unitary nation state, Brexit tends to be legitimised as British along Leave-Remain divides. Contrarily, Brexit is illegitimated as an English phenomenon where the UK is considered a plurinational union state. The empirical analysis confirms that the SNP's and the Conservatives' discourses on Brexit and the IndyRef debate are scripted in relation to the conceptual unitary/union fault lines over the character of the Union. Both events tend to be discursively (il)legitimised in and by the constructions of the conflicting British and Scottish imagined communities as well as the antagonisation of the in-groups political Other in the UK or the Scottish Government, respectively. To this end, both events are exploited politically in relation to debates about the UK's and Scotland's constitutional future(s) as means to conflicting ends of unity and nationhood. These findings indicate a need to recognise that the devolved aspects of the UK's political culture is more significant than the foremost theoretical considerations illustrate.

This thesis contributes to the academic debate about the UK's character at a time of rapidly changing (identity) political landscapes. It concludes that it matters more than ever whether Britain is considered a unitary nation state or is rightfully acknowledged as a political union state because it determines the extent to which the nations and their devolved interests are recognised as legitimate actors on their own. Accordingly, the fault lines over Brexit – just like Scottish independence – are also conflicts about the Union's (dis)united future. Brexit, thus, appears to have more in common with the Scottish IndyRef than initially assumed since both can be explained in terms of a deeper British identity and political crisis that has been heightened by developments within rather than beyond the Union.

Contents

Chapter One

Introduction: Brexit, a misnomer?

There is something peculiar about the current state of the United Kingdom. It seems that '[t]he people of what was widely regarded as one of the oldest and most consolidated nation states' have, in the words of Keating (2012), 'stopped thinking about themselves as a nation' (107). What has followed is a budding academic interest in Britain's many disunities (Colley, 2014), if not even the end of the Union altogether (Nairn, 1977). The prospect of an unravelling of the UK is also mirrored in opinion polls, indicating a striking public indifference to the prospect of a break-up of Britain. A 2019 Future of England survey has even revealed that approximately half in England (52%) and Wales (47%) think that 'Brexit is likely to lead to the break-up of the United Kingdom' (para. 10). Almost two thirds in Scotland (61%) agree. Hence, it is unsurprising that the UK is also facing renewed calls for a second Scottish independence referendum just six years after the original 'once in a generation' vote was rejected with a clear, if not altogether decisive, margin of ten percentage points (Scottish Government, 2013). Such restored interest in an IndyRef2 well before the expected generational turn should be viewed in light of Brexit, the UK's 2016 referendum vote to leave the European Union, which was backed by only 38 per cent of the Scottish electorate.

From this perspective, it is far from unjustified to suggest that Brexit, the portmanteau for 'British exit', is a misnomer. Not only does the British denominator not encompass all corners of the officially named *United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, just two of the

UK's four parts voted to leave the EU.[2] That is, Britain did not vote for Brexit; England did (Henderson et al., 2017).[3] The major issues, at least through devolved lenses, is that the referendum was a UK-wide vote with a UK-wide electorate, however much its legitimacy can be debated. 'Because we voted in this referendum as one United Kingdom,' then-Prime Minister Theresa May (2016) insisted, 'we will negotiate as one United Kingdom, and we will leave as one United Kingdom' (para. 23). From this perspective, the Scottish Bremain vote, likewise counted in Northern Ireland, is legally inconsequential.

It does not subtract from its political consequences, however, since the UK Government's one-nation stance on Brexit is fundamentally at odds with the UK's plurinational character as recognised with devolution in the late nineties. This political turn to partial self-governance was instrumental not only in recognising the less than unitary character of the British state but also in legitimising the diverging political wills across the Union. Hence, geographical and political divisions over Brexit are far from unwarranted, nor is it striking that devolution and Scottish nationalism are major antagonists to the UK Government's unitary Brexit stance. These disunions were fuelled further by the 2019 General Election, which both granted the central Conservative government a solid general mandate to 'Get Brexit Done' and secured the Scottish National Party a landslide victory in Scotland, restoring both their reputations after disappointing election results in 2017. Hence, the election, which was called to loosen the deadlock on Brexit, did very little to resolve the long-lasting political stalemate between the central government in London and the devolved governments in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. Instead, it stirred the Scottish independence debate, with Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon (2016) having made clear her intensions to 'take all possible steps … to give effect to how people in Scotland voted', as Brexit

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[2] The Leave margins range from a low in Scotland (38%) and Northern Ireland (44%) to a high in England (53%) and Wales (52%), with an overall turnout of 72 per cent. See Electoral Commission (2019) for breakdown.

[3] Brexit can be attributed to inequal voting distributing as England makes up 85 per cent of the UK electorate. Had Wales voted for Remain like Scotland and Northern Ireland did, it would likely not have tipped the scale (Henderson et al., 2017).

represents a 'significant and material change of the circumstances in which Scotland voted against independence in 2014' (para. 37). The central government has, in turn, refused further referenda on the matter. Trapped between legal and political entrenchments of legitimacy, Brexit threatens to complicate the already tense relations between the British state, its devolved nations and their respective identities.

1.1. Research objectives

The Brexit campaign, some have argued, opened a Pandora's box at the heart of the contradictions of globalisation, bringing issues of populism, sovereignty and immigration directly to the British people (Clarke, Goodwin and Whiteley, 2017). With these topics being so remarkably salient in the Brexit referendum campaign, it is not unwarranted that relevant studies overwhelmingly frame them around the idea that Brexit is a British phenomenon. Yet, this approach neither embraces the UK's complex structures of 'elective affinity', i.e. overlaps in national identity and political/constitutional preference (Aughey, 2017), nor does it encompass the internal challenges of devolution and Scottish nationalism to the British state. That is to say that the current approach to Brexit is one-legged because it widely focuses on just one part, the state, of an otherwise highly charged nation/state reality that has only become more explosive with the divisive nature of Brexit. The blind spot of such state-centric focus is devolution, which is embedded in non-state nationalisms that reject the legitimacy of the unitary central government and its approach to Brexit. In other words, whilst the UK-wide Brexit vote has merited significantly greater levels of scholarly and political interest, the often-overlooked national voting margins remain powerful markers of the urgency of (re)theorising the British shorthand for Brexit to include both the UK's unitary dimensions and its devolved political realities.

The objective of these pages is to examine the challenges of conceptualising a collective British (identity) politics in the age of Brexit. To grasp its significance, the underlying character of the British state should be understood in relation to its nations, the specific case being Scottish nationalism and devolution. On the basis of a critical literature review of

existing studies on Brexit, this thesis develops a theoretical critique that runs parallel to an empirical analysis, with the aim of setting forth an alternative, more holistic way of studying the UK's plurinational character. Specifically, it inquires a conceptual/contextual-discursive framework of British and Scottish (identity) politics to understand the co-dependence of academic and political interpretations of the legitimacy of Brexit. This allows a left-right-centre perspective on Brexit to flourish by demonstrating the equal importance of British and devolved politics in the persisting puzzle of the character of the UK.

Examining Brexit, devolution and Scottish nationalism in concert is methodologically fruitful for the wider debate about the character of the Union and of Britishness in the 21ˢᵗ century. The thesis suggests that playing down Britain's devolved and plural dimensions, largely to the benefit of the centralised state, risks sketching only a partially accurate image of contemporary Britain. The immediacy of the issue becomes even more apparent when considering Scottish nationalism – the focus of the current pages – because it concerns a potent national identity that takes precedence over Britishness within its people. Academics and politicians alike should, therefore, engage critically with and tread carefully when assuming Britain as the epicentre of Brexit.

1.2. Problem formulation

Based on a critique of existing literature on Brexit and a renewed framework for understanding the UK's devolved realities, the thesis examines the ways in which Brexit informs the fundamental challenges of assuming a British identity politics in an age of devolution and Scottish nationalism. This overarching focus predicates the below research questions, which come together in the hypothesis that academic interpretations of Brexit exist in a microcosm of one nation unitary political discourses, thereby neglecting the relationship between the British state and its plural national identity politics.

- How does the theoretical fault lines between the British unitary state and its devolved nations inform whether a British Brexit is legitimised in and by contemporary political sciences?

- How do British and Scottish political actors discursively frame and justify/condemn Brexit as a British phenomenon in relation to Scottish independence along the theoretical nation/state lines?

The thesis brings together the above theoretical/empirical inquiries in a discussion about the wider implications of Brexit as a British phenomenon, with a focus on the extent to which it might mark a critical juncture for the future of the UK.

1.3. Chapter outline

The thesis falls into four chapters that come together, as mentioned, in the objective of developing a theoretical critique of Brexit as a British phenomenon in parallel with empirical analysis. That is, the theoretical qualification is not a precondition for the empirical analysis; it operates in their interplay and with equal weighing, as per the problem formulation.

The initial chapters address the perennial challenges of academically adopting, qualifying and interpreting a British identity politics. Chapter one brings together a theoretical critique of current literature on Brexit coupled with a proposed pluralist framework for the contemporary relationship between the British state, its devolved nations and their identities. Chapter two justifies this framework with its focus on the major trends of Anglo-Scottish political union, the British nation/state dichotomies and the constitutional challenge that Brexit poses to devolution.

If the opening chapters focus on how to approach Britain and Scotland conceptually and contextually, then the third chapter empirically tackles the puzzle of how political legitimacy is framed around the idea of the nation and/or state character of the Union. The discourse of the Conservative UK government is analysed against that of Scotland's devolved government, represented by the Scottish National Party, with the aim of accounting for how presuppositions of British identity has the power to contribute to an uneven representation of the UK's political reality/ies. The concluding chapter discusses the implications of Brexit for the future(s) of Scottish and British politics. This also ties a bow around the thesis' claim that a renewed theoretical approach to 21st century Britain might benefit research on Brexit and beyond.

Chapter Two

Challenging Brexit's unitary bias in contemporary political sciences

The United Kingdom is not a nation state; the presence of its multiple, co-existing and, at times, conflicting national identities makes this astonishingly apparent. Such assumption is not ground-breaking per se; in fact, it is widely acknowledged that rather than being a unitary state, the UK is a 'plurinational union' (Keating, 2018: 168). What is curious, however, is a continuing tendency in the social sciences to turn a blind eye to this inherent nation/state deviancy. Kumar (2000) has, indicatively, noted that the nature of the UK largely remains a 'conceptual hole':

> Taken largely for granted, unexamined and untheorized it is only when Britain is faced by threats from within and without, only when there is talk of "the break-up of Britain," that serious attention has turned to the character of the United Kingdom (757).

Only since decolonisation, he argued, has there been a need 'to confront the question faced previously by many nations: "who are we?"' (593). Formulating an answer to this distinctly British question is difficult for a number of reasons but has to do with nomenclature at the core, at least for academics (Aughey, 2001). The mentioned theoretical gap can, thus, be reduced to an issue of defining the UK for a new political era. What defines the post-imperial Britain? Who are British? How does Britishness

relate to Englishness, Scottishness, Welshness and (Northern) Irishness? At the heart is nation and state identity politics.

One reason for the conceptual haze surrounding the question about how to approach the UK is the persistent academic insistence that the Union is a nation state when the answer is much more complex. Thus, researchers ought to be careful when adopting 'Britain' as their analytical focus because it presumes the superiority of British state politics, which in time skews the image of its devolved dimensions to the 'second order' and conceals the complex devolved and national realities (Jeffery and Wincott, 2010: 179). Researchers should, instead, engage with reassessed theoretical frameworks that modify the strict nation state narrative to include what has been termed the 'British dimensions' (Samuel, 1995). That is not to say that Britishness is not real; it merely suggests that one-sided approaches to Britain are far from enough to account for the UK's character, and it is certainly not a sufficient framework for conceptualising Brexit. Its implications cannot be understood without acknowledging the UK's plurinational nature. Extending the theoretical toolbox to include a Four Nations frame allows researchers to account for the pluralist nature in parallel with its unitary dimensions.

This chapter progresses along these lines, firstly, through a critical literature review and, secondly, by establishing a renewed framework for the conceptual character of Britishness and Scottishness by means of theories about the nation, national identity and discourse. This ties together in the methodological framework that is built on the assumption that the character of the UK is a construct that is contingent on the frameworks that academics, politicians and others set forth.

2.1. Literature review

Before progressing into the state of the art, it makes sense to briefly ponder over why it is quintessential to operationalise 'Britishness' instead of assuming it as a default. Indicatively, in questioning 'What is a case?', Ragin (1992) argued that cases are far from 'preexisting phenomena' that exist in a 'conceptual vacuum' (7). They are theoretical constructs that

operate in microcosms of predetermined, by researchers, frameworks. The process of 'casing' is, therefore, relevant for the methodological argument because it assumes that theoretical ideas and principles construct the lenses through which researchers see and construct the empirical world (Ragin, 1992). In short, the theoretical frameworks that researchers apply to their studies guide the empirical results. In this sense, the case is an analytical agent that actively determines the empirical causalities. This links to Freeden's (1996) argument that political concepts are constructs that reflect social and historical usage and acquire meaning 'not only through accumulative traditions of discourse and ... diverse cultural contexts, but also by means of their particular structural position within a configuration of other concepts (52). Only when considering the British state and its national and devolved realities in concert can we understand the implications of Brexit for the future of the UK. This entails moving beyond a taken-for-granted methodological nationalism towards a typology that knowingly understands its reference to the tradition of discourse, to the cultural context and to the structural position.

2.2.1. Beyond methodological nationalism

This critical approach to the literature review is predicated on the assumption that the political theory behind Brexit has largely been developed within a paradigm that has granted a default, and arguably unjustified, supremacy to the nation state. Methodologically, that is part of a widespread trend in the social sciences towards methodological nationalism, defined as the inclination by researchers to adopt and reproduce 'naturalized' assumptions about the supremacy of the nation state (Wimmer and Schiller, 2003: 576). Theoretically, treating Brexit as a British phenomenon risks 'the reduction of the analytical focus to the nation-state,' resulting in a fallacious 'container society [that] encompasses a culture, a polity, an economy and a bounded social group' (Wimmer and Schiller, 2002: 307). This neglects the realities of devolution and the diverging political wills across the UK because 'social scientists have simply not looked for [territorial effects] or defined them out of existence with successive modernization paradigms' (Keating, 1998: ix). Hence, the laissez-faire approach and lack of operationalisation of the analytical focus

leave conceptually deviant cases at risk of being perpetually 'hidden from view' (Wimmer and Schiller, 2002: 302). According to Henderson et al. (2017), the consequence in a UK context is that

> the complexities of a state with four component units become simplified into the study of a "British politics" … which has the effect of veiling the characteristics and impact of England, the biggest part of the United Kingdom, at the same time as marginalising engagement with the other parts of the UK (632).

The result is a 'triple effacement' that marginalises Northern Ireland, forces Scotland and Wales to the edges of research and occludes England, meaning that 'we end up analysing the UK as a fictive country: Anglo-Britain' (ibid.). This sheds light on and eschews the elision between England, Britain and the UK in both academic and political discourse. Whilst methodological nationalism does not predicate a straight line or any default causality between theory and the social world, the fundamental concern 'can be found in the social sciences as much as within the social world itself' (Chernillo, 2011: 99). That goes to the core of the current study.

The best way to test how academia reflects these British biases is to look at studies on voting behaviour, since they clearly reveal their analytical focus. Despite significant differences, there is wide consensus around the claim that specific socio-demographic/economic priors shifted the vote towards Leave. Specifically, Goodhart (2017) has pointed to a dichotomy between the 'anywheres,' i.e. the cosmopolitan youth and the well-educated cultural/social elite prone to voting Remain, and the 'somewheres,' covering the localised older, less well-educated, economically and socially marginalised Brexit supporter. These voting cleavages have also been dubbed the 'winners and losers of globalisation' (Hobolt, 2016) and the 'left behind' Leave voter (Goodwin and Heath, 2016). Others have broadened the category to include a financially 'squeezed middle class' (Antonucci et al., 2017: 211). British-born voters living in areas of relative economic decline or with increasing migrant populations also tipped towards Brexit (Lee, Morris and Kemeny, 2018). Similar studies have

recorded the influence of immigration on Eurosceptic voting, especially on its perceived cultural and economic effects (Goodwin and Milazzo, 2017).

These cleavages mirror a larger academic debate on tensions at the heart of populist politics (Inglehart and Norris, 2016), and are consistent with a larger body of literature on Euroscepticism that focuses on the broadening social appeal and rise of UKIP, Conservative power struggles and the tabloid bias of right-wing news media (e.g Tournier-Sol and Gifford, 2015). The question is whether a 'British Euroscepticism' exists, as argued by Spiering (2004), when studies show that 'Brexit was made in England' because British/Englishness are the biggest drivers of Euroscepticism (Henderson et al., 2017: 631). Haesly's (2001) study on Scottish and Welsh opinions on European integration, for instance, has found that there are strong positive correlations between these national identities and European identification. That is not to say that Euroscepticism is not alive outside England, as Mycock and Gifford (2015) make a compelling case for; instead, non-English nationalisms overall tend to hold more favourable views of the EU (Curtice, 2016).

What emerges from this brief introduction to studies on voting behaviour is an inclination towards a British analytical focus that disguises the national voting patterns. For example, Hobolt (2016) and Goodwin and Milazzo (2017) decidedly examined only the British and the English identity variables, thus finding significant evidence of their hypotheses, because they have selected the identities that are the most inclined to be Eurosceptic (Henderson et al., 2016). That is despite substantial evidence suggesting that these tendencies are significantly weaker in both Scotland and Northern Ireland as well as, if to a lesser extent, in Wales (Scully, 2017). The approach is biased because it treats the local outcomes as 'second-order' which risks skewing the data (Jeffery and Wincott, 2010: 179). It is, thus, not unfair to suggest that many mainstream models of public attitudes treat the UK's complex patterns of identity as 'baked in', i.e. as more a constant than a variable (Clarke, Goodwin and Whiteley, 2017: 137), and as 'nested', leaving Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish and English identities nestled into Britishness (Wincott, 2018: 22). Another issue is

that whilst Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have received special attention after all, England often remains hidden in plain sight and is effectively being conflated with Britain (Henderson et al., 2017). These biases are cemented by the interpretation of a Brexit Britain.

There are some reasons for this British focus. Firstly, the British referendum was inarguably a UK-wide referendum, even if its legitimacy has been debated. It is, thus, not unfounded that researchers assume this focus, simply because Brexit is officially a British decision, and researchers are ultimately interested in unveiling trends within this frame in order to explain or predict its outcomes. The issue is that not only does such focus 'import the assumption that national competitions are subordinate to the state-wide politics' (Jeffery and Wincott, 2010: 179), it might also stand in the way for deeper analysis of the national tendencies since it blocks for, or even skews, what to expect of further analysis. In other words, whilst there is wide scope for generalisation to Union-level in nation-specific studies, the same is not the case in the narrower study of Brexit Britain because the UK did not vote cohesively in the 2016 referendum.

A second reason has to do with data sampling. UK-wide data is often more readily available, even if such survey frame may not ensure adequate sub-samples from Scotland and Wales, if at all from Northern Ireland. The choice is not, however, necessarily down to specialisation and availability; it may also be more or less substantiated as revealed by the National Centre for Social Research: 'British Social Attitudes covers Scotland too, but it contains too few respondents in any one year to provide us with reliable estimates of the distribution of public opinion north of the border' (Curtice, Devine and Ormston, 2013: 143). This indicates an unfortunate research bias that risks reproducing an English bias.

The last reason also poses a methodological challenge: Northern Ireland is more often than not excluded from studies as being too deviant, a point to make about the literature review above as well. Evidently, the region's Brexit outcome is rooted in its major ethno-national tensions that are often disregarded in mainstream literature with little or no explanation. Such exclusion has immediate methodological consequences for the empirical case, as it disguises the diversity of the referendum vote

and the parallel socio-political realities. This gives undue plausibility to the claim of a Leave vote and leaves Scotland marginalised in its Remain vote. It also has practical consequences in neglecting Northern Ireland's highly complex position in Brexit. In fact, the political issues of stalemate might have been foreseen with regards to the backstop and the intricacies of the Brexit process had Northern Ireland's distinct interests been taken more seriously in the campaign. Scotland's search for in a close relationship with the EU could have been tackled similarly.

The task is how to move beyond a fictive Anglo-Britain. Rather than rejecting the above trends, one way to overcome the British bias is to qualify Britain for analysis. Instead of allowing a particular analytical focus to become so integral to the study that it puts sub-state entities at risk of being bracketed out as difficult and different, there is a need to make space for and expand the theoretical toolbox to pave the way for national trends. When Britain is adopted as a default, what remains is an analysis of a constructed unitary British nationalism that exists because the devolved realities have been defined 'out of existence through the methodological choice' (Jeffery, 2018: 552). That is despite the national level being just as potent a driver of voting cleavages, if not more when tested against Englishness, as the default British state level (Henderson et al., 2017). These reflections suggest that the political sciences might need to rectify its general neglect of the political significance of national identity. At a time of devolution and Scottish nationalism, 'British politics' cannot, and should not, stand alone. The addition of the UK's national realities to the academic mainstream might deepen our understanding of issues that play into the crisis of the Union. Therefore, we can only understand state-level politics if we do not remove the sub-state drivers from the equation.

This is not an attempt to argue that the British state is insignificant in Brexit, nor is the goal to deny or erase the presence of Britishness. Instead, we should approach UK politics equally through a bottom-up analysis of the component nations, considering the national challenges embedded in the vote and aligning them with the state-wide framework rather than the other way around. That also entails acknowledging national disparities in other studies on UK politics. This approach is not merely

beneficial in academia, but it also has very significant practical implications because it points to the issues that hindered Brexit for four years.

2.2.2. Towards a historical consciousness

An alternative approach to the UK has much to gain from a historical consciousness since such 'reflection can never avoid being called upon to explain the present' (Aughey, 2001: 1). In the current case, an understanding of the UK's plural dimensions has much explanatory value to the contextualisation of Brexit. Davies (1999) has even argued that the political crisis that currently faces modern Britain is one of public historical deficit; that 'society simply cannot function efficiently' without history (xxvi). The same goes for academia: Analytical concepts are, however flat they might seem, context dependent. Accordingly, taking an interest in how the present is contingent on the past is essential to exploring contemporary social and political contexts. This also means that the handling of history is of relevance for any given study of the UK because different ideological interpretations arise according to the researcher's epistemological focus (Ragin, 1992). That is, perhaps, why the theoretical struggle to conceptualise the UK's contemporary character poses particular headaches to researchers on Brexit. The question is whether it boils down to an actual lack of historical minding per se or, rather, if some interpretations are so heavily permeated by one particular understanding of history, often marked by pre-World War and imperial Britain, that they fail to adapt when the status quo changes, as marked by devolution. One major issue that has faced researchers of the Union is that of nomenclature, which has been of considerable interest to historians for decades (Aughey, 2001). Many have noted that the UK 'is notorious as the only state ... without an adjective; the appellations "Uke" or "Ukanian" have been coined only in satire or jest' (Keating, 2012: 107), and, perhaps the very issue lies in this lack of an accurate adjective to denote the UK:

> None of the existing handles quite fit: we live in a State with a variety of titles having different functions and nuances - the U.K. (or "Yookay", as Raymond Williams relabelled it), Great Britain (imperial robes), Britain (boring lounge-suit), England (poetic but troublesome),

the British Isles (too geographical), "This Country" (all-purpose within the Family), or "This Small Country of Ours" (defensively-Shakespearian) (Nairn, 1988: 93).

The categorisation of the UK is, accordingly, hampered by political utilisations of a name that does little but exclude. In a wider sense, the discursive issue of definition is bound up in a wider political struggle to transform, maintain and even discard the UK altogether, which makes evident why researchers ought to carefully qualify their choice of terminology to denote the Union. By substituting 'Britain' for the 'United Kingdom', it might even be argued that academics (and by implication politicians and others) illustrate a 'very imperfect grasp of the complexity and diversity of the state' (Robbins, 1983: 3). The question is how to mend the conceptual hole of the UK's character at a time when 'it is too late to save Britain by the proper use of nomenclature' (Aughey, 2001: 7).

Historians have been rather more articulate in approaching the plural British dimensions than in other disciplines. In 1992, Linda Colley argued that 'we are now less likely than we were even ten years ago to describe exclusively English events and trends as though they were necessarily synonymous with British events' (312). This seems remarkably paradoxical in light of Brexit. What she pointed to was the seminal historiographical attempts to establish a 'new subject' in British history, most notably undertaken by J. G. A. Pocock in the seventies. 'Instead of histories of Britain,' he critiqued, 'we have, first of all, histories of England, in which Welsh, Scots [and] Irish ... appear as peripheral people when, and only when, their doings assume power to disturb the tenor of English politics' (Pocock, 1975: 603). In other words, the taken-for-grantedness of a British nation state not merely neglects the national identities, it also forces a default Anglo-British narrative that complicates understandings of contemporary history. In fact, it invariably conflates Britishness with English nationalism, fundamentally alienating the surrounding nations as well as negating the significance of their distinct devolved political realities in relation to the central state.

Such ideology based Anglocentrism explains Pocock's initial efforts to redistribute the theoretical weight from England to a polycentric

narrative that allows the UK's plural histories to come into their own whilst simultaneously acknowledging their mutual influence and interaction. The key here is that '[t]he fact of a hegemony does not alter the fact of a plurality' (Pocock, 1975: 605). That is to say that the unitary dimension of the UK's political culture and the realities of a British identity do not confirm a privileged position of Britishness, nor does it negate or reduce the significance of sub-state nationalisms. What it does is question how to conceptualise the relationships between the nations, which have been 'linear, binary and parallel' at different times in history (Lloyd-Jones and Scull, 2018: 6). The answer is, perhaps, that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot exist in genuine polycentric narratives; that is one reason why the conceptualisation of the UK is a semantic minefield. As such, Samuel (1995) has argued that the label 'Four Nations' serves as a reminder that

> British history is alive to the importance of dual allegiances and multiple identities: even when it offers us a unified subject matter – as, say, state formation or the forging of national identity – it does so by stressing similitude but difference' (vii).

In advocating for a different British history that 'focuses more on the tenacity of our island ethnicities and allows more conceptual space for schisms and secessions' (xiii), he points to a different historiographical imagination that does not assume the break-up of Britain, as asserted by Nairn in 1988, but instead a different mode of Union altogether. Assuming such pluralistic historical imaginary as the prism for Brexit allows for a deeper and more thorough insight into the character of contemporary British history. It essentially urges researchers to engage with the dynamics of a shared British history and politics through a dual prism.

Linda Colley (1992) so warned researchers navigating the Four Nations history to be careful not to let it be 'pushed too hard or too exclusively' since it risks the reduction of Britishness 'to the interaction of four organic and invariably distinct nations' (313). This is currently at stake in the social sciences, albeit in the opposite way. To use Colley's (1992) words against her, 'the four parts ... have been connected in markedly

different ways and with sharply varying degrees of success' (314). Whilst she is right that it justifies studying Britain as one entity, it equally attests to why we should consider its four nations. In fact, if the claim that a perspective has been lost with the Four Nations perspective, then the same can be said if we allow the national realities to be reduced to the state. Therefore, it makes sense to realign the plural histories with their singular counterpart through a historical consciousness that does not relegate the UK to a single entity without qualification beyond its name. Thus, whilst Colley (1992) finds that a Britishness frame 'helps to explain its late twentieth difficulties' of Britishness (but not of Britain itself), i.e. as an identity crisis (328), the Four Nations perspective is useful for understanding the combined identity and political crisis of a 21st century Britain that is marked by devolution and the political credibility of Scottish nationalism.

2.2. Theoretical framework

Taking an interest in how history colours the present, instead of assuming its default, requires an operationalisation of the concepts at play. The historical consciousness of British nation/statehood forces researchers to ask what defines the nation as opposed to the state. A major shortfall in much literature is that the nation, a political community, is often used synonymously or conflated with the state, a collective political organisation, indicating that little attention is being payed to their distinctive and collective characteristics: The nation is more than, and does not necessarily equal, its governing body. In the worst case, such conflation legitimises the state and marginalises its people, since the nation predicates the raison d'être and the legitimacy of the state. That is problematic because nation state congruence is rarely achieved, even if nations intuitively seek to establish their own state as is evident from Scottish politics (Gellner, 1983). This thesis focuses on Britishness and Scottishness to build an understanding of these divergencies between state and nation. The following section qualifies Britishness and Scottishness for further examination in the coming chapters, with a focus on theories about the nation and corresponding identities to grasp the character of the UK.

2.2.1. The British (nation) state

A major point to make in the conceptualisation of the UK's contemporary character has to do with the theoretical contingencies of its nation-and/or-state dichotomy. Is Britain a nation or a state? There are two over-all answers to this, which boil down to the theorisation of the nation itself. Sidestepping paradigm-based debates about what has instituted the nation, there is increasing scholarly consensus around theories that define the nation as a more or less modern phenomenon, albeit not necessarily purely modern in appearance (Soule, Leith and Steven, 2012).

The modernist view, in which the nation is an elite construction made necessary by historical developments like industrialisation (Gellner, 1983), assumes a certain level of constructionism in claiming that the nation is a mental construct that exists in the image of national communion. Accordingly, Benedict Anderson (1983) has defined the nation as 'an imagined political community' that is 'imagined as both limited and sovereign' (4). This sees the national community as definitionally delineated by in/exclusionary processes in the minds of the nationalised subject. In other words, the modernist view focuses entirely on experience rather on content or form. Under this definition, Britain can be treated as a fifth nation, simply because the nation is delineated not by its authenticity but by the way in which it is imagined as a nation. This also explains why UK politics appears to be embedded in different narratives of belonging (see Chapter Four), as Scottish nationalism appeals to an entirely different experience and imagined community than its British counterpart.

The weakness of the modernist definition is that '[e]mphasising sentiment, will, imagination and perception as criteria of the nation and national belonging makes it difficult to separate out nations from other kinds of collectivity' (Smith, 2010: 12). Accordingly, whilst Britain appears to embody a national experience (Colley, 1992), it does not mean that it should readily be conceptualised as the UK's fifth nation. As Soule, Leith and Steven (2012) have argued, the longer a state exists, the more it appears to assume the symbolic functions of the nation to accompany the imagined community. Thus, since some kind of nationalism has appeared

in the UK, even if it looks Anglo-British in nature (Kumar, 2000), it makes separating the national experience from the British state difficult.

What determines whether Britain is assumed to be a nation depends on the extent to which researchers recognise the relevance of a deeper-rooted national history. To this end, Smith's (1991) ethnosymbolist interpretation defines the nation as 'a named human population sharing a historic territory, a common myth and historical memories [and] a mass public culture', which he couples with stately practices like 'a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members' (14). Despite its problematic tight-knitted relationship between the nation and the state, this definition is useful because it attributes a national affinity beyond the modern sense of community. The ethnic dimension predicates direct continuity between the modern nation and its defined ethnic roots.

Scottish nationalism bases its fundamental claim to nationhood on a combination of modern, i.e. civic-democratic, features coupled with the historical ethnie to establish cultural and emotional solidary for its distinct community (Soule and Leith, 2012). Britain cannot, however, be defined as a nation in the latter theorisation, simply because it contains no common history beyond the modern period. In fact, the idea of the British nation is largely rooted in its elite forging, which aimed to legitimise the union state in light of the plural nations symbols and civic societies. That is not to erase Britain's very real loyalties nor to deny that the identity might be considered national by the peoples in experience. The British imagined community is certainly real, but Britain is analytically not a nation. Levack (1987) has instead deemed it a 'secondary national consciousness' that 'assist[s] the state when it is in need' (209). This has explanatory value for current efforts by the UK's political elite to assert a common British identity to secure the legitimacy of the state, and by implication Brexit, by assuming and constructing a symbolic British nationhood in unity (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015).

All in all, these reflections suggest that there is ground to argue that there are different mechanisms at play in the British and national identities. Whilst some have argued that it is too simplistic to consider Britishness a non-national identity (Aughey, 2001), the reverse fifth nation

approach dilutes the distinctiveness of its nations, too. Taking the 'imag- ined community' theory to have wider reach than the national society, what it does provide a clear answer to is that the experienced nature of the nation allows nation/state communities to imagine their boundaries differently. Therefore, that imagined communities are elusive, regardless of how they are categorised, allows for overlapping and conflicting iden- tities to flourish whilst also bringing about uncertainties about Britain's character. That Britishness is a state identity rather than a national one can explain the conflation between Englishness and Britishness as well as provide an explanation of why Britishness co-exists with the UK's na- tional identities.

2.2.2. The UK's nation/state identities

At the heart of the nation is an identity that 'provides a powerful means of defining and locating individual selves in the world, through the prism of the collective personality and its distinctiveness' (Smith, 1991: 17). The question about national identity in the UK, however, is particularly com- plex because the multiple, shifting and competing identities can be in- voked as either supporting or competing with each other. In such per- formative terms, national identity can be considered something people 'do … within particular contexts' (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015: 26). It 'implies a more active process of doing, which varies according to context' (17). That should not, however, underestimate identity-as-being, on the other hand, which is not a claim or strategic manipulation of the idea of the nation but is rather, an unconscious set of specific values and under- standings that underlie and inform social life, usually as an 'involuntary reflex' (Fox, 2017: 445). These understandings of identity are not neces- sarily mutually exclusive in the UK's identity landscape, however.

On the one hand, the complex structures of multiple and non-uni- tary nation/state identities across the UK provide evidence for the deep embedment of contradictive identities-of-being in its nations and their nationalised subjects, even when they are not actively being performed. As such, it is possible to conceive of an internalised national identity that is hidden in the 'crevices of the unconsciousness' (ibid., 444). Therefore, it makes sense to examine how these identities-as-being relate to each

other in the UK. The latest report on national identity in the British Social Attitudes found that Britishness, especially north of the border, is in a weaker position than its national counterparts. When forced to choose a single identity, only one in five Scots claimed Britishness (20%), whilst around three-quarters indicated Scottishness (69%) (Curtice, Devine and Ormston, 2013: 144). Yet, forcing the choice of a single identity risks undermining the willingness to acknowledge at least a sense of Britishness in the nations. Allowing for modulated answers, the parallel Scottish Social Attitudes found that around 40 per cent felt both Scottish and British, even if Scottishness remains the most strongly felt of the two identities. The proportion of those declaring exclusive or predominant Scottish identity has often exceeded 60 per cent (Curtice and Ormston, 2013: 20). A smaller, yet newer, YouGov survey has found similar trends in Scotland: 84 per cent of Scots feel either fairly (23%) or very strongly (61%) Scottish, whereas 26 per cent feel 'very strongly' and 33 per cent 'fairly strongly' British (Brocklehust, 2018). In comparison, Britishness enjoys high attachment in England, where 44 per cent choose both English and British (the same number choosing Britishness as their main identity in forced choice), whilst 29 per cent consider themselves predominantly (12%) or exclusively (17%) English (ibid.). British-only, on the other hand, is a minority identity across the UK, ranging from six (in Scotland) to ten per cent (in England) (Curtice, Devine and Ormston, 2013).

That Britishness is typically embedded in dual identities and rarely sits as a single identity-as-being justifies that it exists as a state identity as an addition to its national counterparts. Studies even suggest that Scots are able to distinguish between their state and national identity and accordingly modulate between the two (Bechhofer and McCrone, 2015). This points to the existence of identity-as-doing in its performative function. To this end, national identity as a concept boils down to an 'imaginary complex of ideas' that are 'real to the extent that one … identifies with it emotionally' (Wodak et al., 1999: 22). That mirrors Anderson's (1983) suggestion that the imagined community is about experience more than content. The elusiveness of such constructivist definition makes national identity as difficult to enclose as the nation itself because people

are, of course, free to consider 'British' their national identity if they so wish, even if British is analytically a state identity (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2017). That is to say that both the nation and the state are imagined communities, which allows for the UK's complex identity landscape.

As argued by Wodak et al. (2009), the imagined community is 'constructed and conveyed in discourse, predominantly in narratives of national culture' (22). Identity-as-doing can, thus, be considered in discursive terms and as a dynamic phenomenon that has to do with a wider goal of boundary creation, interpretation and maintenance. To this end, national identity does not, and cannot, assume an a priori definition, since 'different identities are discursively constructed according to … the situational setting of the discursive act … being discussed' (de Cillia et al., 1999: 154). These various contexts do not produce one-size-fits-all identity narratives; they, rather, allow for multiple complimentary, overlapping or ambiguous versions of identity narratives that can be disputed. Accordingly, the populist notion of a singularised 'the people', which was highly drawn upon for Brexit, is problematic because the British state identity appears to be defined differently according to national context. The question is how these identities are manifested in differently, e.g. Brexit, by different actors, e.g. Scotland and England, since the discursive conception of the nation is a permanent debate over content and meaning, rather than over the experience per se. That is, identities, whether national and or state-based, are situationally contingent and context dependent.

This boils down to the understanding that national identity is not merely an epiphenomenon that is interesting in its own right. It defines a national 'we', how 'we' do things and how 'we' relate to others. Being Scottish (or English, Welsh, Irish) is a vis-à-vis matter. 'What counts,' McCrone and Bechhofer (2017) argue, 'is what people read into the labels in different contexts, recognising that the meanings of the labels may differ' (459). That is not to debate the authenticity of Britishness as opposed to Scottishness and other national identities; it is to suggest that they embody different characters that are crucial to the understanding of their cohabitation. Scottish-British seems to be a fundamentally different kind of couplet to English-British. This is suggestive of the idea that the

generality of the Scots and English may have different perspectives on 'being British', which comes down to the treatment of Britain as a (nation) state concealed in the image of the nation, even if a declining one.

In this regard, one reason why Brexit is more or less a matter of identity politics is that the national self tends to become apparent when it is confronted with a national Other in a politicised context of national identity. That does not merely have to do with a European Other, but it also has to do with a deeper crisis of identity about the character of Britishness in a new era, which has been complicated by Scottish nationalism, the IndyRef and devolution as markers of this crisis. Accordingly, in times of a perceived threat to the nation, there is an increasing need to establish national unity (Wodak et al., 1999), which is why this sequence of highly politicised events taps into issues of identity. At times of political and national division, the awareness of a dialectical other functions as a discursive device that legitimises the national cause by enclosing and binding the nationalised subjects to its imagined community (Hall, 1996). Such antagonism is clear in how Scottishness tends to be defined against Englishness and 'the English' and how Britishness is defined against the European Union. Accordingly, if 'Brexit was made in England' (Henderson, 2017), then it pours oil on an already burning fire of difference between Scottishness and British/Englishness (see Chapter Three).

This is not to say that claimed national identities caused the Brexit – or the IndyRef – vote, even if these national identities 'veer close to politics' (Aughey, 2017: 457); yet, there is wide evidence to suggest that the relationship between politics and national identity has tightened with this sequence of events. National identity affects fundamental political and civic issues, especially as regards the legitimacy of official politics, which also means that national identity is not merely a cultural matter that exists on the fringes of social and political life; it constitutes both. National identity, in this light, is not simply a matter of individual construction and choice; it is claimed in, and affected by, varying political contexts as is particularly evident in Scotland (ibid.). The question whether this relationship will loosen again when politics become less salient, since heightened political awareness is unlikely to persist, even if the lengthy nature

of Brexit may set the UK up for a lengthy period of (identity) political debate, which is rooted in a bigger existential question of the crisis of Britishness and its politics.

2.4. Methodological framework

So far, this chapter has devoted extensive attention to a carefully considered account of the theoretical aspects of the first research question. To reiterate the rationale: Since a case exists in a microcosm of causal processes, the results of empirical analyses are, at least partly, determined by their conceptualisation (Ragin, 1992). That is, if Britishness is adopted as the sole theoretical focus, the empirical results will come out with a British research bias. That, expectantly, legitimises Brexit by constructing the idea of a British nation in unity. In the opposite case, if national identities are assumed as the sole drivers, the result will bear mark of this. In the Scottish case, it likely entails the illegitimacy of both Brexit and the central British government. A carefully considered framework enhances the empirical plausibility and allows to transcend methodological nationalism. Such objective aligns with the principles of the discourse-historical approach to 'integrate as much available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social and political fields in which discursive "events" are embedded' (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: 35). The thesis, accordingly, emphasises the conceptual/contextual conceptions of the UK's plurinational character in the empirical study in chapter four. Before addressing the methodological framework further, a few remarks about the choice of Scotland as the specific case should be noted.

2.4.1. Scotland in focus

Scottish nationalism is the most exemplary case of nationalism in the UK, having gained increasing legitimacy in the previous years, especially with the 2014 IndyRef. Thus, the short and medium-term consequences of Brexit are, arguably, the most evident here for historical, political and contemporary reasons. Whilst there are nationalist movements in all corners of the UK, although care should be taken when considering the English form, these tendencies are less separatist than those in Scotland. Northern Ireland's special status raises entirely different questions about

ethno-nationalist conflicts and a potential reunification of Ireland. Wales is noteworthy not only because of its surprising vote for Brexit, but also for its close historical ties to England, which has limited Welsh nationalism. The Scottish case, contrarily, has broad potential for generalisation, thus allowing for more direct links to be established between, across and beyond the UK. This focus also allows the study to manoeuvre in the different forms that devolution and nationalism takes across the isles.

2.4.2. Textual sources on Brexit

The texts chosen for the empirical analysis demonstrate the ways in which dominant political actors in Britain and Scotland promote different perspectives of Brexit based on their idea of the nation. Due to the nature of the analysis, the text sources are inadequate to be representative. Instead, it constitutes an exemplary demonstration of textual analysis that aims not to engage with a detailed discourse analysis but rather to employ the analysis for wider discussion. Three criteria have guided the selection.

- As the study analyses political discourses, it focuses on British and Scottish-authored party political and government publications.
- The analysis traces the discursive development between the aftermath of the referendum in 2017 and the leadup to Brexit in 2020.
- The texts relate to the themes of the British and Scottish nations; the effects of Brexit; the constitutional voice of the British state and its devolved governments; Scottish independence; and the future of the UK. Discourses on the EU will be excluded entirely.

The text sources include the 2017 and 2019 party political general election manifestoes by the Conservative Party and the Scottish National Party; the 2018 white papers on Brexit by the Scottish and British governments; and the Scottish government's 2019 request for a second independence referendum flanked by the 2020 letter of rejection from Prime Minister Boris Johnson. They are listed in full in the works cited.

2.4.3. Discourse-historical approach

The empirical analysis relies on the techniques associated with critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013), in particular as applied to

nationalism and national identity (Wodak et al., 1999). The basic idea is that 'a specific national community becomes reality in the realm of convictions and beliefs through reifying, figurative discourses continually launched by politicians, intellectuals' and the like (de Cillia et al., 1999). Since the central assumption is that the nation is constructed according to various contexts, the empirical study benefits from the social constructivist logic inherent to the discourse-historical approach, which provides an analytical toolkit for analysing uses of discourse practices to maintain dominance or assert alternative narratives, often in power relations (Wodak et al., 1999).

The discourse-historical approach is based on the assumption that situational, institutional and social contexts shape and affect discursive acts in a dialectical relationship, meaning that 'discourse constitutes social practice and is at the same time constituted by it' (Wodak et al., 1999: 8). In focusing on social life in its discursive aims to provide social criticism based on linguistic evidence, this method of critical discourse analysis combines a plethora of historical, political and linguistic perspectives to identify the relationship between texts and social practice (Wodak and Reisigl, 2009). Van Leeuwen (2006) has even argued that '[i]n more recent work social theory may even dominate over discourse analysis' (234). Accordingly, the thesis is less concerned with the concrete linguistic structures and more interested in the social phenomena that constitute and shape discourse. The analysis, accordingly, employs a selectively detailed discourse analysis to establish itself within a wider debate about the character of the UK in an age of Brexit and Scottish nationalism.

The purpose of utilising the discourse-historical approach for the current pages is to systematically relate macro levels of contextualisation to the micro level of textual analysis to understand how Britishness and Scottishness are discursively manifested through Brexit and Scottish independence. Wodak and Reisigl (2017) propose a three-dimensional framework that focuses on, firstly, the thematic content of a particular discourse; secondly, the strategies used in its production; and, thirdly, the

linguistic means employed in the process. These layers are cross-checked with the relevant theoretical approaches and against the socio-historical background in Chapter Three. Wodak et al. (1999) propose four overarching strategies for the specific analysis of national identity:

- construction strategies (establishing in- and out-groups)
- perpetuation strategies (maintaining established national groups)
- justification strategies (as above when status quo is under dispute)
- transformation strategies (alteration of recognised truth)
- destruction strategies (demolition of recognised truth)

Depending on the political ideology, it is expected that all five strategies appear in the texts. That is because political actors aim to create a particular image of the nation/state and its past, present and future (constructive strategies), defend, maintain and justify these images (perpetuation strategies); or to create a new narratives (either through transformation or destruction strategies). On the basis of the conceptual/contextual aspects of British and Scottish nationalism, it is expected that perpetuation dominates the British discourse, with the constructive and transformation strategies more or less overarching in the Scottish one.

Complementing these macro-strategies of national identity is discourse strategies, which are the micro criteria for analysis. Discursive strategies are, according to de Cillia et al. (1999), 'more or less accurate plans to achieve political, psychological, or other kind of objective' (31). In other words, they are analytical interpretation tools to examine how content areas become meaningful. As such, these objectives do not exist in a vacuum; they are, instead, realised because they rely on existing discourses and hierarchies of meaning (Wodak et al., 1999). This emphasises a contingency of meaning that is context dependent and operates with different objectives. Identifying these objectives in empirical analysis illuminates the deeper political agendas in Brexit and Scottish nationalism as regards nation and identity formation. The framework is modified from the structure proposed by Wodak and Reisigl (2017: 52).

Discursive strategies	Linguistic devices

Nomination, reference Discursive construction and membership categorisation of persons, phenomena and events	Deictics (e.g. 'we' and 'they'), tropes (e.g. metaphors, metonymies and synecdoches), attributions; verbs and nouns denoting processes and actions
Predications Discursive qualification of people, phenomena and events?	Evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits and implicit or explicit predicates, collocation, flag words
Argumentation Justification, legitimisation and questioning of representations	Topoi, i.e. the line of argument, fallacies and counterfactuals, attribution (responsibility, causation)
Perspectivisation Positioning and expressing involvement or distance	Deictics, metaphors
Intensification, mitigation Modifying the illocutionary force	Modal particles, subjunctive, hyperboles, vague expressions

Table 2.1. A selection of discursive strategies adapted for the analysis of Scottish and British conceptions of nationhood, adapted from Wodak and Reisigl (2017: 52).

Table 2.1 is designed to categorise key linguistic realisations by discursive strategies and purposes. Some occur more frequently than others, and there is a considerable overlap of the parameters. Certain devices that do not occur in the texts, e.g. verbal markers, have been omitted.

The analysis is marked by hermeneutic-abductive reasoning which emphasises theoretical pre-understanding and contextualisation. Thus, the study exists within a particular theoretical framework, the plural British dimensions, which establishes one understanding of the UK. The textual passages discussed in the empirical analysis are not representational in any statistical nor causal sense, and the choice of focus is arbitrarily chosen to establish the foundation for this particular purpose.[4] The texts are, instead, exemplary of the distinctive ways in which British and Scottish political discourse construct the claims at the heart of their interest.

2.5. Concluding remarks

Underlying the research practice set forth by the discourse-historical approach is the 'formulation of assumptions on the basis of a literature

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[4] Whilst the DHA provides an elaborate empirical framework, it has been critiqued for its arbitrary text collection. One way to overcome such bias is to engage with a multimethodological approach. A widely employed combination is with corpus linguistics. Given the limited scope of this thesis and its aim to demonstrate some wider academic and political trends, however, these wider issues of representativity will not be challenged. The DHA is, for the current purpose, adequate on its own.

review' (Wodak and Reisigl, 2017: 54). The findings in this chapter produce the following trends for analysis. Firstly, nations are mental constructs that exist in the imagination of its nationalised subjects. Yet, even if one can nationally identify with Britain, Britishness is analytically a state identity. Secondly, the nation exists within its historical consciousness and narration of a common political past, present and future, suggesting that there are overlapping and conflicting constructions of a 'homo nationalis' in the UK (Wodak et al., 1999: 30). Thirdly, nations exist in visions of same and otherness, why Scottishness is not necessarily in conflict with the British (state) identity as much as it is considered against the centralisation of Britishness around Englishness. Lastly, discourses on nationhood are produced, transformed, maintained and dismantled through discursive events.

The outlined theoretical challenges of devolution to Brexit might seem obvious, if not even prosaic. Yet, academics have long reflected and been entrenched in methodological nationalism, partly because of the lack of theoretically qualified cases. As Ragin (1992) argued, '[a]s researchers our primary goal is to link the empirical to the theoretical – to use theory to make sense of evidence and to use evidence to sharpen and refine theory' (225). The primary goal of the chapter was to reconsider the theoretical foundation by engaging with theory on the nation, national identity and nationalism in the UK for empirical testing and for further debate on the significance of Brexit to the broader understanding of the UK constitution and the current Brexit stalemate. As such, if Britishness is defined as a state identity, as this thesis posits, rather than as a national identity, such as Scotland and Wales, then it would explain why it at times clashes with non-state national identities.

Chapter Three

Approaching Brexit Britain's plural historical consciousnesses and devolved realities

That the United Kingdom is not a nation state but rather a plurinational one was explicitly acknowledged with the devolution agreement in the late 1990s. This delegation of statutory power over certain national matters to executives in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast is widely regarded the policy solution to the increasing political issues of distinct national character in Westminster (Bromley et al., 2003). But devolution can also be considered through an identity political lens as a 'shibboleth for the political difference of Scotland within the Union, with a need to do things differently' (Leith and Soule, 2011, xxi). Hence, whilst devolution was not necessarily the product of distinct national identity politics, it is firmly grounded therein, not least because the political acknowledgement of this difference in political will initiated 'a significant constitutional change in the political psychology of the UK' (Soule, Leith and Steven, 2012: 2). Paradoxical is, however, that devolution appears to have only marginally manifested in Britain's political culture, which continues to be Westminster-heavy (Mitchell, 2011). Brexit might force this obsolete unitary narrative to the margins, since the divergent political wills revealed by Brexit have reignited the political and constitutional awarenesses that devolution initiated 20 years ago.

Accordingly, Brexit, like devolution, is a substantial change of status quo that brings into question how national identity relates to the UK

constitution and its politics, and it should be situated within the wider historical, cultural and political contingencies accordingly. This chapter contextualises Brexit through a plural British dimensions framework, with a focus on a brief history of Scottish nationalism, followed by an overview of the national realities of British identity politics and the dichotomies of devolved and unitary political/constitutional imaginaries in Brexit and beyond.

3.1. Anglo-Scottish nation/statehood in context

The plural British historical consciousnesses that framed the previous chapter begins before the modern period, when the historical nations were independent nation states; yet, it is often left out of accounts of Britain as a nation state. Thus, a major question to ask is why Scotland has only relatively recently ignited its nationalism when Scottish history is filled with a distinct nationhood and anti-Englishness. A distinct sense of Scottish identity that exists as separate, yet in parallel, to the Union runs deeply in Scottish history.

3.1.1. Forging a (nation) state

The UK's less than homogenous character is largely rooted in its piecemeal forging as a union of nations at different stages of national consciousness. At its core, the Treaty of Union created a British state but failed to inspire a historical consciousness; instead, the historic nations retained their own identities, around which the Union took its unique shape (Kumar, 2000). The British union was not constructed from any blueprint either but was the pragmatic result of Anglophone interests coupled with enticements and coercion that forced the gradual assimilation of the British Isles into a de facto English state (Kinealy, 1999). The 1707 Act of Union, for instance, depended on a political compromise, 'a stand-off even' (Colley, 2014: 89), in which a destitute Scotland accepted Anglo-Scottish union in exchange for financial benefits.

Union created a 'mixed-unitary state' that exhibited both pluralism and centralism (Kidd and Petrie, 2016: 29). For Scotland, it meant the retention of its separate legal and religious systems within an otherwise centralised British state. Whilst the removal of the state organs from the

Scottish nation hindered the development of a fully modern national identity (Nairn, 1977), the remaining national institutions and traditions paved the way for a civic society and national consciousness that was 'autonomous from the state, in Scotland as throughout Britain' (Paterson, 1994: 45). That is to say that something of a Scottish nationhood persisted separately, yet in parallel, to the Union.

Union also posed constitutional issues from the onset because of a dilemma that saw sovereignty invested not only in Parliament, which contrasted to the Scottish constitutional tradition of popular sovereignty, but in a parliament that took the form of its English predecessor. Whilst 'it is by no means clear' to Bogdanor (2019) 'why the new Parliament … shared a main characteristic of an English Parliament … rather than the characteristics of the Scottish' (172), perhaps the answer lies in an English ascendancy over the British state. This dilemma has turned into a latent conflict that still prevails over the extent to which sovereignty was, and continues to be, included in the UK Parliament (ibid.).

Despite these dormant struggles, Scottish opposition against the Union has historically ebbed and flowed, being at its weakest during the UK's economic and imperial hay days. Relative consensus has also emerged around Colley's (1992a) theory of a cohesive British identity that was 'forged' by the pivotal myths of otherness in relation to empire, religion and wars against Europe (first Catholic France, then Nazi Germany), against which Britishness was most clearly defined. Thus, the shadow of empire and industrialisation made it attractive to be part of the Union for some time. This explains, at least in part, the absence of a Scottish nationalism (but not of a Scottish identity)[5] for most of the 18th and 19th centuries, whilst also having explanatory power to account for its 20th century rise in light of the UK's international and economic decline.

3.1.2. The re-emergence of Scottish nationalism

A distinctive Scottish nationalism on the very fringes of British politics only emerged with the Scottish National Party in the stagnant interwar

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[5] By ensuring its civic character and distinct nationhood, Scottishness was maintained in parallel to the Union, even in the glory days of the British state identity (Kidd and Petrie, 2016).

period, although it was without significant influence at this time of unionist Anglo-Scottish convergence. It was only by the 1960s and 70s that the 'cross-border equipoise' began to crumble, with the rise of a distinct Scottish politics alongside the SNP and its effective 'it's Scotland's oil' campaign (Kidd and Petrie, 2016: 32). Yet, despite a rising SNP vote in this period, the party's major breakthrough failed to materialise in the shadow of the party's internal struggles, a brief Labour revival and the unsuccessful 1979 devolution referendum. In a political twist of irony that same year, the SNP also supported the downfall of the devolution-supporting Labour Government, with its no confidence vote in the Callaghan-led ministry, following its devolution failure and the winter of discontent. This effectively ushered almost two decades of state centralisation and anti-devolution Conservative governments. Around this time, the UK's unitary dimensions were also cemented for decades to come, with its accession to the European Communities as a single country in 1973.

This period of Conservative government is, perhaps, the most important one for understanding the contemporary politics of Scottish nationalism. Westminster's unitary imaginary proved ever more troublesome to reconcile with certain aspects of the UK's territorial constitution in the 80s and 90s, not least because Scottish politics became progressively distinctive and produced diverging outcomes from the rest of the Union. Critically, the Conservative Party, despite its Union-wide appeal, struggled to secure Scottish seats and majorities, making its range of unpopular policies under the premierships of Thatcher and her consecutives controversial in Scotland. The pre-devolution years were, thus, marked by a widespread sense that Britain's Conservative politics were English in nature and lacked legitimacy north of the border (Mitchell, 2009). Yet, whilst Westminster politics became increasingly unionist and centralised in character, Scotland's non-Tory parties aligned in centre-left politics with the Scottish public in mind.

Still, Scottish politics, despite feeling increasingly distinctive, continued to be shaped in and by Westminster for most of the 20th century. Yet, Scottish nationalism flourished in most areas of society during this time. In fact, Scottish nationalism has long been more than a political

position as suggested by McCrone (2001) and evidenced by Scotland's cultural renaissance in the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, notwithstanding the SNP's relative electoral marginality in the pre-devolution period, Scotland's national distinctiveness was far from irrelevant to Scottish society and British politics in the pre-devolution period.

3.1.3. Devolution, Brexit and the potential of independence

The pre-devolution years were, overall, marked by the remarkable speed with which Scottish politics and nationalism garnered legitimacy and credibility coupled with the role of the Conservatives in the invention of a distinct Scottish politics. The shift in Scottish attitudes from the 1979 to the 1997 devolution referendum is, therefore, best understood in terms of legitimacy, with a Scottish Government seen as the answer to the Union's democratic deficit. The 1990s also saw the SNP, in the shadow of Labour, become a plausible political force, with its development of a distinct ideological position coupled with a critique of the British imperial state and its raison d'être in political independence (Jackson, 2014).

The culmination of these issues came with the Blair-led 1996 'New Labour, New Life for Britain' General Election manifesto that promised a referendum on the transfer of powers to designated national executives in order to 'bring power closer to the people of Scotland'. Curiously, it was part of New Labour's 'politics of Britishness' in response to what was later called a 'dangerous drift in anti-Union sentiment' (Brown, 2007). Interestingly, Blair was no enthusiast for devolution himself; in fact, he continually vowed that parliamentary sovereignty would remain. He even insisted in an interview with *The Scotsman* that 'sovereignty rests with me as an English MP and that's the way it will stay' (Marr, 1997). Whilst he presumably did not intend to place himself as a sovereign nor to reduce the UK to England, the message was clear, especially when coupled with his assertion in the same interview that devolution would be no less than an equivalent to an English parish council. Anglo-British views persisted.

The 1997 General Election led Labour to a landslide victory, and the following referendum set Scotland on the path to self-governance in 1999 with a convincing majority to establish a Scottish Executive. Assemblies were also established in Wales and Northern Ireland. The 1998

devolution settlement was, however, only the beginning, with significant extensions of devolved powers having been granted since. The Scottish Executive was also renamed as the Scottish Government in 2007 as an assertion of prototypical statehood that has been considered a symbolic move 'for top-down Scottish national identity construction' (Unger, 2013: 59). Devolution appears to have solidified Scotland's distinct sense of self.

In this light, devolution should be seen as 'a process, not an event' (Davies, 1999). This fits with the objective of gradualist SNP members, who see Scotland's path to independence as one of devolution to gain government experience. Devolved advances have, thus, allowed the Scottish Parliament to differentiate itself from Westminster. Rather than killing nationalism 'stone dead' as predicted by Scotland's Shadow Secretary of State in 1995, devolution provided it with 'a platform, a plausible strategy and the trappings, prestige and resources of office' (Hassan, 2009: 10). The SNP has since become a particularly forceful power in Scottish politics and a genuine alternative to the mainstream parties in Scotland. Yet, the Scottish quicksilver electorate is known for its shifting political attachments, and the SNP tends to be stronger in Edinburgh than in London, even if that appears to have changed with the 2015 General Election.

It was the SNP's demand for independence that led to the 2014 independence referendum, attesting to the party's influence. Yet, not even amongst SNP voters is there necessarily support for independence in Scotland as evidenced by its rejection of the party's raison d'être at the IndyRef in a clear, yet far from decisive, victory for supporters of the Union. What followed the IndyRef was curious, however. The SNP neared a clean sweep of the Scottish seats with 56 or 59 constituencies at the 2015 General Election. According to Kidd and Petrie (2016), 'this opens the issue of whether voters were happy to support the SNP, but reluctant to endorse its flagship policy; or were acting tactically to secure further devolution; or had genuinely changed their mind about independence' (30). The answer remains unclear, and Brexit complicates matters further. In a curious twist of events from 2014, the decisive Scottish Remain vote in the 2016 Brexit referendum was coupled with a significant loss of vote share of 21 seats for the SNP at the 2017 General Election. A change of

mind, however, appeared with the 2019 General Election. In the context of messy Brexit negotiations with little involvement of the devolved government by Westminster and threats of a 'no deal' hard Brexit, the SNP regained its prominence in London with 48 of Scotland's 59 seats. The SNP, consequently, restated its mandate for a second independence referendum. A major hurdle is that the support for devolution and EU membership appears stronger than support for independence. The 2021 elections for the Scottish Parliament are likely to determine the next step.

3.2. The political sociology of the United Kingdom

More than anything, the UK seems to be a union of contractions, as this section explores further. It focuses on two major contrasts in the UK's plural consciousnesses, relating to the shifting, conflicting and overlapping dynamics between Scottishness, Britishness and English as well as the UK's character as more than a unitary state but less than a federal union. The question is how Englishness taps into the territorial constitution, which is marked by ambiguity and asymmetry due to devolution.

3.2.1. Nation/state identity dichotomies

Any account of the UK's complex web of identities begins with Britishness, not because there is a set character of what 'being British' entails but because people tend to construct Britishness in rather diverse ways, depending on national identity attachment. In other words, different conceptions of Britishness appear to be developing in Scotland as well as in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Assuming a single uniform definition of Britishness is, in short, highly problematic. According to Kiely, McCrone and Bechhofer (2005), there are distinct national registers of Britishness across the UK, and these cannot be understood 'except in the context in which they are used' (80), which draws lines to the lack of an a priori definition of identity as discussed in the previous chapter:

> 'British' can stand for (a) a synonym for 'English'; (b) simply having a British passport; (c) a regrettable imperialist and racist history, now thankfully over; (d) a proud … legacy of greatness, sadly over; (e) a statement of political Unionism … positive [or] negative; (f) a

> liberal, civic identity uniting peoples of diverse nations and ethnicities under a common umbrella of statehood (ibid.).

Accordingly, Britishness is a complex affair to define in relation to the national identities, not least because the nations have varying political sentiments, historical memories and understandings of 'being British'. The varieties of Britishness, thus, seem to intensify and/or moderate dual allegiances (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015).

The crux of the Britishness complex, however, is that the state is becoming top-heavy in favour of England as evident with Brexit (Henderson, 2017). This English bias of Britishness ensures an overall strong support for the British state in England, perhaps even constructing a nation state-like congruence between the English nation and the British state. It is also likely to encourage the persistence of non-English nationalisms. England is, therefore, particularly important in relation to the British and Scottish Questions because there is significant empirical evidence of a conceptual overlap between Englishness and Britishness (Kumar, 2010). In fact, England dominated the establishment of the British state through the adoption of its political, economic as well as cultural values, institutions and practices, which questions the legitimacy and authenticity of Britishness as a coherent identity. Thus, a fluid relationship between Englishness and Britishness is historically contingent and exists, in part, because the centre of economic, political and ideological power in Britain is London. This elasticity does not occur in Scotland where a sharper distinction between Scotland and Britain tends to be drawn.

The question is how the British and English identities relate to Scottishness and its nationalism. Leith and Soule (2011) have argued that with Englishness often being 'identified as congruent with Britishness', it is 'this connection that often causes the rejection of British identity' in Scots (132). That is to say that Scotland is, arguably, predicated on not being English. Accordingly, Scots are not actively rejecting the Union as such; they are, rather, rejecting its association with England and such bias. The division between Scotland and Britain, thus, appears to be predicated on being different, or 'on the argument that Scots has different values, history or overall culture' (ibid., 132). That is not to say that Scots deny

Britishness; yet, systematic evidence has continually suggested that Scots choose Scottishness over Britishness (Curtice, Devine and Ormston, 2013). The UK's nation/state identities are distinct but not antithetical.

The disconnect between the non-English nations and the state is poorly articulated and represented by the British political parties, regarding both Brexit and the wider political landscape. In fact, consecutive central governments have sought to promote a culture of Britishness in alignment with its unitary nation state narrative. Whilst Scottish, Welsh or English identities are considered legitimate forms of expressions by the central government, they are assumed to be subordinate to a shared sense of British belonging. For the Conservatives, whose aim is to create an image as 'a party that [can] represent the entire British nation ... due to it being symbolic of the values, beliefs, and customs of One Nation', this is rooted in historical narratives of empire and values like democracy and freedom (Seawright, 2010: 119). Such universal values have often been invoked to promote unionism and the idea of a British national identity in favour of the UK's plural national identities and nationalisms. In many ways, this reflects how the UK's political system continues to be interpreted as unitary despite its new political realities of devolution.

3.2.2. Unitary/union state paradigms

Whilst devolution transformed the UK from an ambiguous unitary state to one that is asymmetrically decentralised under the central government, the 'unitary constitutional imaginary' – in which Anglo-British institutional sovereignty remains the central point of governance – is far from defunct (Wincott, 2018: 19). A key issue in the debate about the character of the UK is that '[c]reating new devolved institutions is not the same as creating a new devolved political culture' (Mitchell, 2011: 225). As Brexit reveals, devolution did not move the deeply embedded understandings of Westminster's parliamentary sovereignty towards a pluralist narrative of governance as it did in the devolved nations. Thus, as Gordon (2016) has argued, the challenges posed by Brexit to devolution are rooted in the informal and uncodified constitutional setup, which allows for these overlapping understandings of the Union's character.

Whilst, in theory, the Westminster model co-exists with its devolved realities and mutually shape the constitutional imaginary, the central insistence on Westminster's parliamentary sovereignty has complicated these understandings. This Westminster interpretation of the British state considers the central government to be sovereign, with devolution signifying nothing more than a delegation of authority that can be retained at any given point. The aim of and approach to Brexit is, accordingly, to restore power to Westminster, and in some readings to the British people, and not the devolved governments. The Westminster model is flexible to the extent that it relies on convention rather than a codified constitution, with its one fixed point being that it rests exclusively on the principle of parliamentary sovereignty at its core. This preference for explaining Brexit and Westminster politics through a state-based British identity lens tends to downplay or at worst marginalise the constitutional voice of the plural nations and their devolved governments. Seen contrarily from the periphery, the Union is a plurinational state, in which each of the nations have their own constitutional traditions and national governing institutions. Hence, the devolved conception considers the UK to be a union of nations with their own identities and political traditions. This view poses that a Westminster-heavy Brexit is less than legitimate because it neglects the economic, political and cultural differences that are manifested in the devolved governments across the UK. These differences in interpretation are central to how various political actors approach Brexit. In short, it matters a great deal whether the UK is interpreted as a unitary or a union state.

These misalignments relate to the uncodified nature of the constitution. In a straightforward sense its flexibility makes it, at least in theory, unproblematic to adopt to contemporary circumstances, as long as the changes occur gradually and with consent of the sovereign UK Parliament (Gordon, 2016). Yet, the asymmetrical patterns of decentralisation initiated a fundamental reform of the constitution itself, and Brexit forces this constitutional change to be followed through. The issue is that slow adjustment is impossible because the withdrawal leaves both Britain's constitution and its devolved settlements unprotected. This is problematic

because the devolved governments have shown remarkable resistance against the UK Government for discarding devolved interests (Bogdanor, 2019). Thus, the challenges posed by Brexit are rooted within both the informal constitutional setup and differing understandings of what the character of the Union is.

In practice, the UK is a multilevel polity. Its devolved settlement involves multiple power centres and divergencies in the devolved political systems across and between the governments (Mitchell, 2011). The territorial differentiation is characterised by varying levels of delegated competencies to reflect that the devolved nations hold distinct and different economic, historical and political realities and priorities, which are oftentimes also nonaligned with those of the central government. The UK's devolution settlement is, accordingly, characterised by asymmetry in which Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own executive and legislative institutions with varying levels of devolved and reserved powers, whilst England continues to be governed exclusively from the centre.

England is interesting with regards to the unitary paradigm because the tensions revealed by Brexit are widely historically contingent and rooted in the ascendancy of England in the British state, both in its creation and governance. The state-centric Brexit approach reproduces a political hierarchy in the UK's political culture, in which the national devolved realities are being subordinated to the central government and its corresponding cultural-political state identity (Wincott, 2018). Accordingly, Britishness in its Westminster configuration seems to be a political synonym for the dominance of England for two reasons. Firstly, England's population makes up 85 per cent of the UK's electorate. On this basis, 'Brexit was made in England because of England's population weight in the United Kingdom' (Henderson et al., 2016: 643). Secondly, the 'double-hatted nature of Westminster', in simultaneously acting as the central government and as the English parliament, establishes concerns about the conflicts of interest in Brexit and beyond (Rawling, 2017: 13). The flipside to the double hatting is the West Lothian Question of England's democratic deficit as the only nation without a devolved government. The paradox is, as has been argued by Tierney (2017), that if

England were to gain a devolved parliament on its own terms, the amount of relative power would likely hollow most the functions of the UK Government. In other words, an English Parliament would rival the central government to an extent that would call the relevance of the latter into question. Perhaps the UK subsists not in spite of but because England is without a devolved government.

The question is whether there is one correct understanding of the UK's nature in light of England's deviant position. Indeed, there is much appeal in considering the UK as a union state because of its devolved political system; yet, if Mitchell (2011) was right to suggest that '[t]he description of the UK post-devolution as a union state has come to resemble past complacent descriptions of the UK as a unitary state' because of 'the absence of an English Parliament separate from Westminster' (225), then perhaps truth lies in between the UK as a unitary and a Union state – but is gradually evolving into the latter. In any case, there is a misalignment between the central and devolved governments that needs to be addressed, since the widespread understanding that the UK is a unitary state in any straightforward sense redirects researchers' attention from the depth and length of the history of its nation/state asymmetry. That is another reason why it is highly problematic that researchers tend to account for the British, and thus largely English, tendencies in the referendum and beyond, since it gives political plausibility to the Brexit narrative without devolved consent.

3.3. Brexit and the struggles of devolution

Tensions between the nations and the state over Brexit originate in the territorial constitution and the question about sovereignty, not just as a trigger for Brexit in the first place but also in the question about who oversees Brexit, and which government is actually taking back control. The devolved governments, with Scotland at the very front, are determined to keep their ground on national matters, whilst the central government is just as set on the 'Brexit means Brexit' strategy (May, 2017). Indicatively, Sandford and Gormley-Heenan (2018) argue that 'intergovernmental disputes since the Brexit referendum arise from tensions between the principle of Parliamentary sovereignty and the practice of 'permissive

autonomy'" (2), questioning Brexit's legitimacy. It, therefore, makes sense to briefly ponder over the nature of the UK's territorial politics, because Brexit illuminates the fundamental problems in the informalities of the constitution.

3.3.1. The constitution and devolved consent

One thing that has yet to be touched upon is how Brexit has the potential to complicate the devolution settlement, since the withdrawal is likely to change the entire context of the UK's constitutional arrangements. Precisely defining its quasi-federal nature is difficult because the asymmetrical patterns of governance have allowed for devolution with only partial reform of the constitution itself (Gordon, 2016). This has consequently left major issues like the legal entrenchment of devolution and sovereignty in abeyance. As McHarg and Mitchell (2017) have argued, Brexit exposes these weaknesses because Westminster can – and does – deny Scotland, and by extension the other devolved governments, a 'decisive … constitutional voice in the implementation of Brexit' (524), even if Brexit in practice requires devolved cooperation with Westminster to solve its fundamental issues of internal stalemate.

Jeffery and Palmer (2007) have argued that the shifting form of the UK polity has resulted in some 'contradictory dynamics' that have left the devolved governments in a competence trap between the UK's exclusive competence over EU matters that will have domestic impacts on devolved powers. In line with this, the central government has reserved the exclusive right to negotiate Brexit, and the Westminster government is only in theory obligated to consider devolved interests. Thus, despite the official terms of reference to seek 'a common UK approach' (May, 2017), the devolved governments have had little influence in shifting the official red lines. Brexit means Brexit even if all three devolved governments have expressed concerns about its national implications. What this means is that Brexit puts into question 'the dominant reliance on political mechanisms to give recognition to the constitutional significance of devolution, which do not adequately displace continued legal adherence to the assumptions of a unitary constitution' because there is no legal ground for including devolved positions (McHarg and Mitchell, 2017: 512).

The issue is that Westminster insists on having the final power to legislate on devolved matters, although with the Sewel Convention in use it retains that it will 'normally' not. Whilst multiple devolution cases have been put to the courts with statements acknowledging the legitimate and democratic status of devolution as part of national life, the Brexit cases brought to the High and Supreme Courts during 2016 point to a different case. The Supreme Court has ruled that whilst the Sewel Convention is a significant political asset in maintaining harmony between Westminster and the devolved governments, the latter cannot turn to the courts to enforce legislative consent. The Miller case, as it was called, upheld that the Sewel Convention is effectively nothing more than a political convention without de jure effect. In other words, the devolved governments have no legal veto power. As such, the Miller case essentially insisted on the theoretical, although not necessarily pragmatical, unitary nature of the constitution. Wincott (2018) has critiqued the decision, arguing that it is problematic to 'ignore the role of conventions as the basis of much UK constitutionalism in the absence of a superior form of law' (45). Hambleton (2017) has coined this 'devolution deception', suggesting that there is effectively little legal entrenchment and that the UK's nations have no real devolved constitutional voice. The Sewel Convention practically upholds the vision of a unitary UK state. As such, if Brexit is indeed 'a challenge for the UK constitution, of the UK constitution' (Gordon, 2016: 409), then Brexit certainly exposes the limitations of the UK's constitutional setup and raises real concerns about Westminster sovereignty and indeed the (im)possibility of a national response.

That is not to suggest that devolution has been, or is, a failure, however. According to the Institute for Government (2019), the biggest success of devolution has been to bring powers closer to the people and, thereby, establish legitimacy; the question is how Brexit affects this. Douglas-Scott (2019) has suggested that '[i]t is difficult to see how the legitimacy of devolved government can be sustained if vitally important decision on EU membership are taken without consensus' (3). Yet, if we agree that the lack of a constitutional status for the devolved governments and the preference for Westminster politics are

problematic, then Brexit might provide both an opportunity and a threat for the devolved governments. The opportunity that might arise could give impetus for a redrawing of the constitutional architecture, perhaps allowing for greater entrenchment of the devolved governments (Young, 2017). The threat, nevertheless, seems more immediate, because it relates to how Brexit is being decided with no legal entrenchment for the devolved interests in at least a soft Brexit and how it is managed. Brexit might in the short term bring about a recentralisation of powers to Westminster but has the potential, at least in theory, to amount to the strengthening of the devolved governments as well as a restructuring of the constitutional architecture of the UK if and when Brexit reveals even more fundamental issues in the current constitutional setup (Bogdanor, 2019). The immediate issue, however, is that Westminster has lit a fire for longer term problems by repudiating attention whilst deeper-lying tensions grow under the mask of Brexit.

3.3.2. The UK's European-like organisation

Relative consensus has emerged around the theory that Britain's historical exceptionalism made the UK an 'awkward partner' to the EU (George, 1990). This pre-devolution theory was flanked by the institutional argument that 'the British state constitutes a "difficult fit" … this tension is likely to become more and more apparent' (Wilks, 1996: 164). The prediction itself was not far off, being symptomatic of its contemporary unitary state paradigm. The issue arises when drawing upon this longstanding theoretical assumption to claim that Brexit is a reaction against the loss of state sovereignty and the EU's lack of legitimacy (Gamble, 2018). The British Union is not necessarily contradictory to its European counterpart in this new political era of devolution; in fact, it appears to bear remarkable parallels to the EU in its plural politics centred in a supranational institution with its lack of both a unified demos and a fixed telos.

An interesting scholarly divide appears in this light. On the one hand, scholars on British politics and government have been inclined to omit devolution from analysis to argue that the UK's institutional framework is fundamentally different from the EU (e.g. Bogdanor, 2005). On

the other hand, scholars on European integration have previously argued that the UK's multilevel and devolved political system makes for a good or at least a 'better fit' with the EU (Bulmer and Burch, 2005: 880). The UK, thus, seems to be enforcing similar structures internally as the ones that Brexit is considered a reaction against. This contradiction has clearly been both revealed with and imposed by Brexit.

3.4 Concluding remarks

There are so many facets to the internal tensions of Brexit that any single account is likely to be overtaken by events. What is evident, however, is that the divisions revealed by Brexit are historically contingent on a complex array of factors that are rooted in Britain's nation/state dichotomies of identity, character and the constitution. There appears to be a relationship between national identity and constitutional change, with a prima facie case for assuming that the return of Scottish national identity and politics alongside the invention of distinct national politics and devolution in the non-English nations is changing British politics and complicating how the UK is understood in an era of devolution and Brexit. Therefore, it fundamentally matters whether the UK is considered a unitary state or a political union, especially when considering the predominance of Anglo-British sentiments in Westminster. Historical efforts to forge a British nation have been defeated by Scottish nationalism, and the pitfall of the territorial constitution more than ever illuminates that the UK is a state more than anything. Thus, national identity political realities exist, if not yet manifested into the actual political culture, and that should not be ignored by politicians or academics.

Chapter Four

Analysing British and Scottish political discourse on Brexit and Scottish independence

An earlier chapter posited that one reason why researchers on Brexit tend to assume Britain as their default analytical focus is the nature of the referendum. Being a UK-wide vote, that is what political scientists are interested in exploring. Academic interest in Brexit, thus, seems to be linked, or at the least run parallel, to the dominant British one-nation politics. That concurs with the hypothesis that academic accounts of Brexit exist in microcosms of political processes. The issue is that the one-nation focus, typically framed along a Leave/Remain axis, complicates, if not blocks, attempts to generalise the results at the national levels. Buckledee (2018) falls into this trap in *The Language of Brexit: How Britain Talked Its Way Out of the European Union*. With its clear British focus, the title finds that Leave campaigners utilised language more persuasively than their remain counterparts (also Koller, Kopf and Miglbauer, 2019 and Charteris-Black, 2019). In comparing Brexit to the IndyRef, one Buckledee (2018) chapter found that the difference in outcome was that 'Project Fear' successfully manifested in the former but not in the latter. Yet, this premise is misleading because Scotland in isolation did, in fact, reject Brexit. Logically, the strategy of fear was also misguided in 2016.

That is, assuming Britain as a default skews attempts at nationalising Brexit, why there is a need to advance academic discussions about Brexit beyond British discourses, especially since research on Scotland's

Brexit discourse has yet to manifest. This chapter progresses with a discourse-historical analysis at the intersection of the empirical and theoretical realities of British and Scottish politics. In accordance with the second research question, the empirical interest centres on how British and Scottish representations of nationhood shape constructions of Brexit in the light of Scottish independence and vice versa.

4.1. British constructions of national unity

The first portion of the empirical analysis explores the British one-nation unitary discourse with special attention to how (a) constructions and perpetuations of the imagined British community (b) justifies conceptions of Brexit as a British phenomenon and (c) dismantles calls for a Scottish independence referendum in this light. Particular focus is placed on the construction and perpetuation of British nationhood in attempt 'to maintain and to reproduce a threatened national identity, i.e. to preserve, support and protect it' (Wodak et al., 1999: 33). Supporting such nation flagging, justification strategies are used 'when the status quo is under dispute and needs to be justified in order to be preserved' (Benke and Wodak, 2004: 121). This covers efforts to justify Brexit as the symbol of a united British nation that is threatened by Scottish nationalists' calls for independence. This will become evident as the analysis progresses.

4.1.1. 'Britain is a great nation' – on British union and nationhood

The analysed British discourse employs various discursive devices to elicit feelings of unity, which aims to veil the national divides running through the Union. Thus, national loyalty, which extends into the past and future, is central to the construction and perpetuation of the imagined British community. A key aspect of this one-nation discourse is the extensive use of the personal pronoun *we* as a deictic flagging of sameness that does not assume explicit nomination of the ingroup:

> We are an outward-facing nation; we have a dynamic, innovative economy; and we live by common values of openness, the rule of law, and tolerance of others ... We share an ambition for our country to be fairer and more prosperous (UK Government, 2018: 1).

We is the typical national deixis, i.e. context-dependent referent, in political discourse, because its inherent inclusion and exclusion qualities make it susceptible to manipulation. Sidestepping its exclusionary properties,[6] inclusive deictic expressions ('we', 'us', 'our') exemplify what Wodak et al. (1999) describe as 'linguistic imperialism' to 'verbally annex … the we-group … into a single "community sharing a common destiny" by letting fall into oblivion all differences' (45). Table 4.1. exemplifies such referential assimilation of intranational sameness in the above passage.

Reference	Nomination	Predication
Britain The British	'we'	are an outward-facing trading nation
		have a dynamic, innovative economy
		live by common values of openness …
		share an ambition for our country …

Table 4.1. Example of lexicalisation of the British 'we'

This national *we* takes metonymic form in its reference to a collective British *we* that extends beyond its direct addressees to singularise the plural peoples into one nation in the image of the predicated in-group.

Such deictic appeals for unity are often emphasised in adverbial ('*Together,* we can make it greater') and possessive terms, which are often adjectively reiterated ('our *own* people', 'our *own* country'). In other instances, spatial references are coupled with possessive flagging of the Union, denoting the shared character of 'our United Kingdom' or grouped possession of 'our four nations'. Similarly, the UK's superordinate character is reiterated vis-à-vis the nations in possessive terms ('the United Kingdom's four nations'). These deictic realisations perpetuate a British unity that encapsulates its peoples into one large imagined community.

The national deixis is modified by a range of other nominations of the imagined British community that are overtly marked as British with limited appeal to the UK's plurinational nature, indicating an explicit

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[6] Literature has focused extensively on discourses of Otherness, with emphasis on immigration, as a defining issue of Brexit, at least in its British conceptualisation (e.g. Cap, 2019). This mirrors Colley's (1992) claim that Britishness has historically been shaped by its Others.

assimilation strategy. As table 4.2 outlines, there is rather little variation in the employed nominations.

Character	Nomination	Referential strategy
Nation	'British'	Nationalisation through de-toponymic nationym ('British')
	'the British'	
	'the British people'	
	'the people'	Collectivisation
	'the nation'	
	'the country'	
	'Britain'	Spatialisation through metonymic use or personification of toponym, 'country for person'
	'our country'	Deictic flagging of toponymic and spatial references in possessive terms ('our')
Union	'our United Kingdom'	
	'our nations'	
	'our union of nations'	
	'our union'	

Table 4.2. Nominations of the British in-group in Conservative-authored texts

The imagined British community is frequently constructed by the referential strategies that Reisigl and Wodak (2001) refer to as 'nationalisation' and 'collectivisation' (48-52), the former dominating. There is also a distinct weighing between Britain ('the nation') and the UK ('our union), with all texts favouring national reference over its union counterpart. This nationalised use of 'Britain' is an instance of referential metonymy: 'Britain' in this case refers to the whole of the UK, which counters the Northern Ireland question.

The nominative affirmations of a collective British nation are contained within a framework of positive self-representation, ascribing to Britain positive attributes ('great', 'strong', 'fair', 'prosperous', 'independent'), which conveys that 'Britain is a great country – the greatest place on earth' (Conservatives, 2019: 25). The positive British self-affirmations are also reinforced by similes ('like a lion', 'like a super-green supercar') coupled with constructions that invoke a conventionalised country as a person metaphor, which frames the nation as a single entity in human terms ('a country that stands tall', 'a country that holds its head high'). As Leith and Soule (2011) have argued, such figurative constructions are

'particularly useful … when needing to speak about abstract concepts or things' (66). The abstract concept in this case is the UK's character, which is only vaguely flagged once in national terms as a 'diverse and tolerant country with confidence in its own identity and values' (Conservatives, 2019: 22). This distinct lack of symbolic content of Britishness is a sustained discourse feature. Coupled with the limited use of topoi, it suggests that the British texts do not seek to justify their identity constructions.

The lack of nationhood flagging in unequivocal terms can be interpreted as an attempt at difference-levelling the plural nations within the Union. Presupposing the UK's unity as a default entails a strategy of avoidance of the plural British dimensions: 'We are a United Kingdom, one nation made of four … Its very existence recognises the value of unity' (Conservatives, 2017: 31). What predicates the nations is, thus, not their differences but the UK's fundamental unity. Attached to the Union is also a somewhat limited range of unifying common features that focus exclusively on soft positive attributions ('inclusion', 'pride', 'unity'). These predications, which also include a reference to the effusive 'our precious union', stand in direct relation to the powerful predications of 'this great country' (Conservatives, 2017: 5). Such relation marks the dependency of 'our four nations' on the superior and figuratively framed protective Britain. This dependency of the nations is also flagged by a curious spatialised reference, suggesting that '[w]e can still do more for the people of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (ibid., 31). The apparent omission of England from this passage coupled with the deictic marking of a Conservative *we* suggests that the perspective from which this one-nation narrative is framed is a habitually English-centred Conservative powerhouse. This questions national affinity and the deictic centre from which the difference-levelled one nation unitary narrative is articulated.

Another potential interpretation of the lack of nationhood flagging, which goes hand in hand with the English bias, suggests that what is overwhelmingly nominated as a nation is predicated as the state, with frequent emphasis on 'the UK's sovereignty' (UK Government, 2018: 6). Curiously, the overarching strategy of positive self-representation is overwhelmingly marked by what would typically be considered the state

domain, flagged across all three texts by values such as 'freedom', 'democracy', 'tolerance' and 'the rule of law', which exist within 'our institutions and constitution' and encompasses a collective 'our citizens' (ibid.). The latter denotes the subject of the state with constitutional rights rather than a nationalised subject who belongs in imagination. Accordingly, Britishness is tied to the system of government more than an actual nationalised people. To an extent, this has historical roots in the idea of a British nation state that is largely predicated on its system of government. Parliamentary sovereignty is an almost mythical practice and feature in Westminster that, despite being heavily pronounced, is neither formalised nor institutionalised. The British state, thus, needs to be predicated on the idea of a people to be legitimate and maintained in the longer term.

The imagined British community, in this light, is defined in and by the image of a sacred nation state rooted in shared memories. This image exists in historical myths that define Britain's model character as 'the most successful political union in modern history' (Conservatives, 2017: 31), and which is reinforced by being 'immensely proud of the UK's history' (Conservatives, 2019: 51). The framing of political continuity and a common British future is, accordingly, determined by the assertion of a singular British history that its people are united in: 'Now is the time that we must show, once again, the strength of our nation and the character of our united people' (Conservatives, 2017: 84). This boils down to an implicit topos of history as a teacher, which conditions that 'because history teaches that specific actions have specific consequences, one should perform or omit a specific action' (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: 89). In this light, Britain's historical unity is assumed as the blueprint for future success, denoting a historical trajectory between Britain's past and its future: 'We have a glorious history, but we believe that our best days lie ahead of us. With this plan to ... establish a stronger and a prosperous future, we will, as a nation, go forward together' (ibid, 10). By deliberately avoiding the narrative of the plural British dimensions in this assertion of historical unity, the Conservatives employ a particular narrative of history that perpetuates the one-nation narrative and supports the discursive construction of a hegemonic British national unity.

The assertions of unity discursively reduce Britain's intra-national differences by evoking presupposed commonality and perceived agreement, which is important to the discursive framings of Brexit and an IndyRef2. The 'we, as a nation' becomes directly involved in the propositions of unity it contains, thus sharing the same perspective as 'we Conservatives' and, by implication, being complicit in the calls for political continuity, as reinforced through patterns of emphasised deontic modality: 'We *will* secure the best deal with the European Union … Now is the time that we *must* show … our strength as a nation and the character of our united people. We *shall* succeed, if we go forward, together (Conservatives, 2017: 84; added emphasis). This reinforces the Conservatives' need for political continuity in Brexit which is framed through an 'appeal to/demand for political continuity in the future' (Wodak et al., 1999: 39). That is central to the framing of Brexit Britain as the means to such end.

In summary, the analysed Conservative discourse pays extensive attention to the idea of a superordinate British nation that contains four (other) nations, with the aim of centralising, assimilating, and encouraging uniformity of the plural nations in parallel to the outlined theoretical conceptions of Britain as a fifth nation. The national imaginary of an all-inclusive sense of Britishness is contingent on the affirmation of its union character only insofar it is predicated by unity. In other words, the dominating strategies of construction and perpetuation emphasise and presuppose national cohesion regardless of Britain's assumed character, even if the flagging of nationhood seems to be based more on the system and myths of government than on a marked national character. The general lack of topoi also suggests that the Conservatives do not aim to justify its idea of British nationhood. This framing of the UK's character can be expected to affect the handling of Brexit and an IndyRef2.

4.1.2. 'The democratic will of the people' – on Brexit

One reason for the lack of reasoning behind the Conservative one-nation narrative is that it serves to elicit feelings of unity in relation to Brexit. In fact, the image of Brexit exists in and is justified by the narrative of nationhood: 'Let's get Brexit done and take this country forward' (Conservatives, 2019: 3). The passage suggests that Brexit is paramount to uniting

the British people. That Brexit is, accordingly, assumed to be a British phenomenon is realised through explicit appeal to democracy, frequently coupled with populist references, marking 'the democratic will of the people' (ibid.). This aims to justify Brexit in the image of a united nation with a common interest in Brexit: 'In short this is a Brexit which will deliver in the full democratic decision of the people of the UK, and work for the whole country' (UK Government, 2018: 97). Such argumentum as populum fallacy appeals directly to the agreement – or the majority (consensus gentium) – of the singular British people. That is, if the British people (fallaciously constructed as an absolute majority) voted for Brexit, then the decision should be respected as such. It simultaneously legitimises both Brexit and its one-nation character.

That Brexit is a British phenomenon is reinforced by the claim that '[t]he United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union' (Conservatives, 2017: 32). Here, the narrow referendum result is framed as seemingly consensual across the Union with a metonymic reference. Such assimilation is extrinsically linked to the strategy of avoidance, which erases the decided Remain voices of Scotland and Northern Ireland. Curiously, there is explicit acknowledgement of 'the democratic decision of the Welsh people to Leave' (Conservatives, 2019: 47), which apparently seeks to justify their mandate to 'get Brexit done' by legitimising the result beyond its English values through the emphasis on Wales coupled with silencing of the diverging voices in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Another familiar theme that the British discourse draws upon is of a largely idealised post-Brexit future, rooted in the topos of a better place. Such transformation strategy is realised by the generous use of positive evaluations that mark 'our new freedoms' and 'the opportunities that Brexit brings' (Conservatives, 2019: 32). These predications are often coupled with extensive self-affirmation that assigns positive attributes ('strong', 'great', 'prosperous') to the continued British political community. The idealised imaginary is linguistically realised by several literary tropes that syntactically compare the UK to a caged lion or 'some super-green supercar stuck in traffic' (ibid., 2). These similes assume that the British powerhouse is reluctantly trapped in an EU that keeps the UK

from 'unleashing its potential' (UK Government, 2020). The confinement metaphor suggests that only 'by getting Brexit done' can 'we release that lion from its cage and take this amazing country forwards' (Conservatives, 2019: 1). Such notion of moving forward emphasises a difference between the future and now, which is also realised by a journey metaphor that frames Brexit as a means to an end: 'We are embarking on a momentous journey that can – and must bring us together as a united country' (Conservatives, 2017: 5). The destination is, accordingly, the post-Brexit better place that is so fundamental to the narrative of a united British nationhood. This is coupled with a history writing metaphor, suggesting that 'we begin a new exciting chapter in our nation's history. It now falls on us to write that chapter' (UK Government, 2018: 1). The British *we* is a metonymised reference to the UK Government and its assumed mandate to metaphorically write a singular history on behalf of the British people. Such justification of Brexit shifts the attention away from the strategy of avoidance of the national, especially the Scottish and Irish, histories and their potential futures of secession to a continuation of their collective history.

The Conservatives are also notoriously vague on how to achieve this transformation towards a brighter future, with only generic references across all three texts ('the process of Brexit', 'a principled and practical', 'a smooth and orderly Brexit'). Using various markers of simplification, ambiguity and vagueness, the texts tend to resort to political generalities like 'taking back control' and 'let's get Brexit done' when defining its approach (Conservatives, 2019: 5). Other examples suggest that 'no deal is better than a bad deal' (Conservatives, 2017: 36), and the idea of a "Brexit that is in our national interest, and the UK's and the EU's mutual interest' (UK Government, 2018: 54). Such strategic vagueness does little to define or reason the narrative of Brexit, hence the lack of explicit topoi. This strategy is reminiscent of the one-nation discourse on British nationhood.

Brexit is not exclusively predicated in positive terms, however. In fact, what purportedly tears the Union apart is not internal differences but the opposition's stance on Brexit. The Conservatives' 2019 manifesto, in particular, makes extensive use of strategies that discredit the Conservatives' political opponents by means of ad hominem defamation and

strategies of blame and responsibility in claiming that a 'Corbyn-Sturgeon alliance' is responsible for the 'Brexit chaos' and 'divisions and deadlock that have been so bad for our politics' (32). Rather than placing blame on the divergent political wills between the UK's plural peoples, the metaphorical 'battles for Brexit' are constructed as the results of 'the obstacles the other parties have put in our country's way' (5). This juxtaposes 'the other parties', who are 'thwarting the democratic decision of the British people' (48), to a Conservative Party that 'respects', 'honours' and 'can deliver' Brexit. Such overt political othering is coupled with references to 'a destabilising and potentially extremely damaging rift between politicians and the people (48). Here is a classic populist imaginary that shifts blame to an elite politics distant from the people, a well-known strategy of intertextuality in the Leave campaign. This concept of Othering runs parallel to the discursive dismantling of calls for Scottish independence.

4.1.3. 'A campaign to separate the UK' – on IndyRef2

The construction of an assimilated British nation is reinforced in the Conservatives' discourse on a second Scottish IndyRef. In his letter to Nicola Sturgeon, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson argued that Scotland is decisively British. This is justified by a topos of circumstance that implies that because the first IndyRef was a 'one in a generation' vote, Brexit does not negate that Scotland voted against independence:

> You and your predecessor made a personal promise that the 2014 Independence Referendum was a "once in a generation" vote. The people of Scotland voted decisively on that promise to keep our United Kingdom together, a result which both the Scottish and UK Governments committed to respect … The UK Government will continue to uphold the democratic decision of the Scottish people and the promise you made to them' (UK Government, 2020: 1).

There are several elements in the passage to dissect, most of which are linked to assigning the Scottish people a default sense of British identity and to antagonising of the Scottish Government. First and foremost, a second IndyRef is rejected, simply because it 'is not what the Scottish people want' (Conservatives, 2017: 32). Such conjecture, or fallacy by

exclusion, employs a argumentum ad populum with its appeal to the Scottish majority vote in the IndyRef; yet, it avoids countering its own reasoning because it omits any reference to the Scottish majority vote against Brexit, what the Scottish Government (2019) calls a 'material change of circumstance' (11). What justifies the rejection of an IndyRef2 is, accordingly, a selective appeal to 'the democratic decision of the Scottish people' (UK Government, 2020: 1), which mirrors the cherry-picking justification of Brexit. The presupposition of a default British unity and agreement on Brexit is, thus, justified by the argument that 'the people of Scotland' have decidedly chosen to stay in 'our United Kingdom' – and by implication also Brexit – at the IndyRef. The alternative to an IndyRef2 is, accordingly, to 'work to bring the whole of the United Kingdom together and unleash the potential of this great country' over 'further independence referendums' (UK Government, 2020: 1), linking to the transformation strategy employed in the discourse on Brexit to denote positive continuity of the British political union. It also draws directly on intertextuality to the 2019 'Get Brexit Done: Unleash Britain's potential' manifesto, which clearly aligns the pursuit of Brexit with the IndyRef2 rejection.

Where the first IndyRef is framed in terms of its democratic values, the pursuit of a second one is referred to as 'a campaign to separate the UK' (UK Government, 2020: 1). This dismantling strategy is mirrored in a range of negative predications that flag the referendum as 'acrimonious', 'undemocratic' and 'divisive'. The illegitimacy of a Scottish IndyRef2 is contrasted with the ideal referendum environment by means of a topos of circumstance, suggesting that the time is not right: 'In order for a referendum to be fair, legal and decisive, it cannot take place until the Brexit process has played out and it should not take place unless there is public consent for it to happen' (Conservatives, 2017: 32). The discourse, thus, balances on the dismantling of an IndyRef2 as illegitimate, which in this specific context is also a means to an end to legitimise Brexit as evidenced by the letter of rejection. An interesting scope to note as regards the dismantling of Scottish independence is a remarkable difference in discursive strategy to the positive framing of a referendum in Northern Ireland: 'We will uphold the central principle that Northern Ireland's future

should only ever be determined by democracy and consent' (Conservatives, 2017: 34). This open-ended narrative of democracy and consent contrasts to the steadfast rejection of an IndyRef2 because it is embedded in 'our commitment to the 1998 Belfast Agreement' (ibid.). A central pillar of the Northern Irish peace process is the potential of reunification, whereas the 1998 Scotland Act posits that the UK Government can refuse requests for a Scottish referendum. There are, thus, clear asymmetries in the discursive legitimisation of potential disunion.

In appealing to the democratic nature of the first IndyRef and by constructing Brexit as a British phenomenon in this light, Scottish calls for an IndyRef2 are dismantled as political inventions. Such exclusionary discourse concerns an explicit juxtaposition of an antagonised Scottish Government that supposedly works against its UK counterpart and the British people, which by implication includes Scots. To this end, the UK government explicitly asserts itself as the protector of Scottish interests: 'Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP promised that the 2014 referendum would be a 'once in a generation' vote and the result was divisive. We believe that outcome should be respected' (UK Government, 2020: 1). This exclusive *we* of the UK Government, accordingly, hovers over its national people and protects its interests from the 'obsessive focus on independence' of the SNP government (Conservatives, 2019: 45), thus illegitimating Scottish independence in this light.

The misalignment between the central and devolved governments is also illustrative of an othering of the Scottish nationalists, who obstruct the enforced British unity and Brexit. This strategy of othering is predicated on the avoidance of the fact that the SNP is the largest party in Scotland and was put in government by Scotland's electorate. Such idea draws lines to the theoretical idea of a British political culture that is yet to politically entrench the devolved realities (Mitchell, 2011). Thus, rather than placing blame on and distancing the people of Scotland for their vote in Brexit, the Conservative discourse shifts blame by means of a topos of external constraint: 'United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union but some would disrupt our attempts to the seek best deal for Scotland and the United Kingdom with calls for a divisive referendum that the

people of Scotland do not want' (Conservatives, 2017: 32). This is a subtle means of discrediting the Scottish nationalists through the indefinite pronoun 'some', which is a means of refraining from explicitly naming Scottish nationalists and, thus, antagonising its supporters. By implicitly blaming the Scottish Government, the Conservatives moderate their othering whilst distancing the Scottish people from the implied other.

These instances of ad hominem deformation are often coupled with the topos of terrible place: 'Twelve years of SNP government have led to an obsessive focus on independence – all while Scotland's public services and its economy have been neglected' (Conservatives, 2019: 45). This emphasis on negative national uniqueness is interesting because the British discourse seems to construct clear-cut differences between a positively self-represented Britain that is, at times more subtly than others, reinforced by attributing negative representations to Scotland: 'Scotland has lagged behind the rest of the United Kingdom in the recent years' (Conservatives, 2017: 32). This is attributed 'the political stagnation that Scotland has seen for the last decade, with Scottish schools, hospitals and jobs again left behind' (UK Government, 2020). Accordingly, the dismantling strategy is reasoned with a locus terribilis, underpinning the centrality of the British national narrative to make up for the SNP's 'damage' on Scotland. Interestingly, where the discourse on nationhood and Brexit was marked by frequent figurative language, the discourse on Scottish independence scarcely employs such devices; rather, the strategy of dismantling illegitimates the potential of a second IndyRef in a matter-of-fact way with no direct emotive appeal, attesting to its perceived illegitimacy.

4.2. Scottish constructions of national unity

It should so far be evident that the loosely defined and little justified understanding of an assimilated British unity allows the Conservatives to reject a Scottish IndyRef as a political invention to legitimise Brexit as a British phenomenon that can bring a united Britain into the future. As will be elaborated in this second section of the empirical analysis, such fifth nation understanding of 'Britain' clashes with the devolved view, because it silences the national realities. Instead, the SNP's discourse (a)

engages in an exercise of Scottish nation-building that (b) denies the legitimacy of the Conservative narrative of Brexit as a British phenomenon and (c) justifies Scottish independence as the appropriate response. Its major discourse strategies are marked by constructive efforts, which serve to promote unification, identification, ingroup loyalty and differentiation coupled with transformative strategies that seek to transmute the British 'status quo ... into something different' (Benke and Wodak, 2003: 121). At its heart, the SNP narrates a potential break with the Union, simply by asserting a Scotland with its own nationhood that is being threatened by Westminster's approach to Brexit as a British phenomenon.

4.2.1. 'One of Europe's oldest nations' – on Scottish nationhood

In disputing the Conservatives' one-nation discourse of British unity, the analysed Scottish texts utilise various discursive strategies and linguistic realisations to assert a distinct sense of nationhood north of the border, separate from the British state. Hence, national deixis is not merely a device to assert unity through an inclusive *we*; the Scottish discourse illustrates that it can also mark difference and proximity. Deictic expressions are, in fact, the 'most revealing of the boundaries separating Self and Other – one important aspect of national identity formation' (Petersoo, 2007: 420). This is illustrative of the so-called discourse of othering, which is marked by a Scottish *we* that is in direct opposition to its defined non-*we*, embodied by the 'they' of the UK Government. The SNP constructs a distinctive national *we* that specifically excludes Westminster as the Other in national terms. Such exclusionary process is stressed in possessive terms to explicitly delineate the proximal and Scottish-based 'our interests' and 'our will', often emphasised adjectivally to mark Scottish agency ('our *own* decisions', 'our *own* future') from the distal and British-based 'their own political interests' (SNP, 2017: 15). These deictic expressions, coupled with spatial and locative references ('here', 'in Scotland'), situate the texts and their readers in a Scottish community that is not imagined as enclosed by the British state but is rather self-contained. What is at play is an 'essential othering from Anglo-Britishness' against which the distinct Scottish nationhood is constructed, reproduced and justified

(Leith and Soule, 2011: 1). This is a particularly central feature when considering the SNP's elusive construction of Scotland's people.

The Scottish *we* is modified by repeated reference to all-inclusive, civic and largely non-identity-related expressions, denoting a 'people of Scotland' that is not by default nationalised as illustrated in table 4.3. Instead, the people of Scotland includes 'all those who have made our country their home, no matter where they come from' (SNP, 2019: 8). Belonging to Scotland is, thus, tied to the physical territory north of the border.

Nomination	*Realisation*
'the people of Scotland'	Collectivisation with spatialised reference in the form of prepositional or participle phrases
'the people across Scotland'	
'the people who live here'	
'the people living here'	
'Scotland'	Spatialisation through toponym used as metonymies or personifications
'our country'	Collectivisation through deictic flagging in spatial and personal terms
'this country'	
'the Scottish nation'	Nationalisation by means of de-topomic anthroponyms
'the Scottish people'	

Table 4.3. Nominations of the Scottish in-group in SNP-authored texts

The loosely defined character of the imagined Scottish community is manifested in the subtle difference between the adjectival and identity-laden 'Scottish people' and the civic-based 'people of Scotland'. The adjectival use of *Scottish* stands in contrast to the Conservative nationalisation of a British people, with any explicit flagging of what is 'Scottish' referring exclusively to Scotland's political entities ('the Scottish Government', 'the Scottish Parliament') or other society-based collocations ('the Scottish economy', 'Scottish industries', 'Scottish businesses'). Such flagging suggests that the SNP is restrained in its assertion of Scottishness, framing Scotland as a nation with only institutions and affairs that are distinctly tied to the emphatic identity; one which does not necessarily define the plural people of Scotland.

Contrarily, the emphasis on 'the people who live here' as the people of Scotland signposts the prominence of a civic and pluralised nationalism in the Scottish discourse that is tied directly to Scotland itself as a

land. This is a well-known strategy in the SNP's political discourse. Leith (2008), for instance, has argued that the party's manifestoes tend to construct belonging with a focus on 'Scotland the place rather than Scotland as a people' (89). An example of this strategy is its widespread national personification of Scotland as a person, i.e. a population metonymy, which collectivises the people in this image (Leith and Soule, 2011). The strongest example of this metaphor comes from the catchphrase of the SNP's independence campaigns, 'Scotland's future in Scotland's hands' with the refrain 'Scotland's voice'. An example suggests that 'Scotland needs a strong voice in Westminster … to ensure Scotland's future in Scotland's hands – not in the hands of Westminster Tories' (SNP, 2017: 29). The personification of Scotland as a person with its own hands and voice, which can hold its own reality and make clear its distinct interests, reinforces the individual character of Scotland and its nationhood at the heart of the SNP's discourse as well as personifies the democratic deficit by antagonising the UK Government and its politics.

Such distinct constructive strategy refrains from assigning cultural and ethnic markers to the Scottish people. Instead, the nominative affirmations of Scotland are framed by positive self-representation and are realised by a range of evaluative attributions that confirm the civic nominations of Scotland: 'We are an extraordinary country, diverse and outward looking, with great potential and much to look forward to' (SNP, 2019: 2). What brings together the Scottish nation is a civic identity that apparently exists beyond the nation's historical experiences:

> Scottish nationhood is more than just a matter of history or a set of national institutions, however. It is also about shared values and aspirations and follows from the idea of the people of Scotland as a distinct political community (Scottish Government, 2019: 4).

Such perpetuation of nationhood suggests that the SNP's discursive positioning admits a degree of strategic openness to people who might not share a strong Scottish sense of identity, but who still belong to its political community. This is indicative of the fact that Scotland houses a range of dual identities from across the British and European unions that do not

necessarily equate to 'being Scottish' in a nationalised sense. A strategic dimension, thus, appears in the SNP's discursive choice to address a spatialised people of Scotland rather than a nationalised and, to that end, exclusive community. Before Brexit, EU citizens were eligible to vote for the Scottish Parliament by virtue of European law and were also granted a vote in the first IndyRef. Therefore, 'Scotland is enfranchising EU citizens' because they are integral parts of its distinct political community (SNP, 2019: 43). This contrasts to the general elections and the Brexit referendum, where only British, Irish and Commonwealth citizens have a vote, the latter due to their historical affiliations with the Union.

Territorial belonging should not be conceived as purely spatial attachment, however, since Scottish nationalism is 'not, as claimed, wholly civic' (Mycock, 2012: 54). Civic nationalism must still have a sense of national identity that the imagined community can identify with, whether it is territorial, historical or cultural in basis, because it ultimately seeks to create an ethnically identified group, however amorphous and limited it might be. The plural democratic character of a civil Scottish nationhood is often framed through national uniqueness as 'one of Europe's oldest nations' (Scottish Government, 2019: 4), which alludes to Smith's (1991) ethnosymbolist conception. This is part of a strategy of unification that constructs Scotland as a nation with a deeply rooted historical foundation as 'a proud historic nation' (ibid., 34).

What is interesting is that there is no assertion of the cultural or ethnic markers that define this proud historical character of Scotland. Scottish history is only defined after 1707 and in parallel to the Union, thus explicitly marking and defining Scottish nationhood in this relation: 'Following the integration of the Parliament of England and Wales and the Parliament of Scotland in 1707, Scotland remained a nation within the new Union state' (ibid., 4). This assertion appears to have less to do with perpetuating its nationhood and more to do with defining Scotland in opposition to the Union, implying that Scottishness is, indeed, constructed in its Other image. Accordingly, what defines the historical Scotland is its distinctive civic society that is constructed as fundamentally separate from the Union:

> Following the political union of 1707, the nationhood has been demonstrated in many ways, including through separate political and legal structure, through devolution, through the 2014 independence referendum, and through a distinct Scottish constitutional tradition (ibid., 23).

This passage is part of a strategy to perpetuate Scotland as a nation with a deeply rooted civic society. That is directly linked to the ideological values in relation to Scotland's constitutional status and appears to be part of a strategy to blur the lines between Scottish nationhood and a prototypical state that is implicitly constructed as different from Westminster. The historical schisms between Scotland and the British state, embedded in a pre-union Scottish nation statehood, live on in the image of Scotland's civic society. Accordingly, the historical assertion of distinctiveness is strategically utilised by the SNP in effort to establish a nationhood of Scotland's past into its present. This perpetuates an internal non-civic unity that exists beyond Westminster's idea of British unity but also beyond civic conceptions of nationhood. The reason is that since an exclusive civic character of Scotland does not necessarily distinguish Scotland from the Union, the construction of a distinct nationhood alludes to a shared Scottish constitutional and historical tradition as part of their cultural toolkit to mobilise the emotions of its civic political community.

The perpetuation of Scotland's historically distinct civic society is coupled with a distinct constitutional difference from the British state, suggesting that 'Scotland has a historic constitutional tradition different from that described by the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty' (ibid., 5). It explicitly disputes the viability of the deeply rooted historical myth of the British system of government and, thus, Scotland's place in the Union. Specifically, the Scottish Government (2017) questions 'why the constitution of a Union state should reflect only one of the constitutional traditions of its constituent nations' (5). This is a clear instance of othering, albeit coupled with referential vagueness that makes it possible to identify the perceived enemy with a certain degree of vagueness in order not to place undue blame on England as opposed to the Conservatives. As Leith (2008) has argued, '[b]y linking the national and the political … the

Conservatives especially are attacked as "anti"-Scottish and by inference perhaps as English but attacks on the English are no more' (89). Thus, the SNP's assertion of Scottish nationhood is widely defined as distinct from the singular Anglo-British history, not as part of it. By asserting a civic history, the Scottish discourse makes a clear attempt to define its historically independent nationhood as different from Westminster to dispute that Britain is a unitary state. By more or less explicitly othering the British state as being English, the SNP avoids assigning explicit cultural or ethnic markers to the people of Scotland to reinforce its civic narrative. That is, there is an Other, against which Scotland can define itself against.

The dissociative argument also aims to transform the status quo of the UK as a 'unitary nation-state' into a narrative of 'a voluntary union of nations' (Scottish Government, 2019: 1). As illustrated in table 4.4, it reframes the UK's character as justified by 'the Scottish Government's view that parliamentary sovereignty, whatever its historical origins or traditional content, is no longer an accurate description of the constitution in Scotland or in the UK' (ibid., 6). This suggests that Scotland's position in the UK is directly determined by the Union's character. The redefinition of the UK from a nation to a plurinational union, thus, functions as an endorsement of the SNP's proposals for Scottish independence, since it 'accept[s] that sovereignty … lies with each part of the UK' (ibid., 18). The initial aim of the SNP's assertion of a distinct Scottish nationhood is, accordingly, to disassociate and transform Britain from the one nation unitary narrative to a union state: 'The nationhood of Scotland and the multinational character of the United Kingdom have been widely recognised, including by the UK Government, by parties across the political spectrum and by civic society in Scotland' (Scottish Government, 2019: 18). The union character of the UK is, accordingly, justified as an already established fact by the British political and societal classes, thus giving plausibility to the SNP's transformative agenda in relation to the political culture.

Aspect	Strategy	Predication
Nation	Perpetuation	Scotland is a nation with the institutions of a nation
		We are a nation in a voluntary union of nations

	Dismantling	Scotland is not a region questioning its place in a larger unitary state
		The UK is not a unitary state
State	Construction	The United Kingdom is a Union state
	Justification	[The UK] is a multi-national country whose constituent parts enjoy different constitutional settlements and rights

Table 4.4. Example of lexicalisations of the Scottish nation versus the British state

There are no references to a nationalised British people nor to 'Britain' in the texts. This absence can be regarded as a deliberate refusal to acknowledge such centralised locus of nation statehood. The aim of this strategy of avoidance is to downplay British heteronomy as a player in Scottish nationhood. There is also a distinct lack of strategies that seek to dismantle Britishness, perhaps because the state identity after all remains widespread in Scotland. The SNP, thus, appears to be more interested in Scotland's future than in dismantling its British past, thus appealing for political discontinuity with the British state but not by default its people: 'Our friends in the rest of the UK will always be our closest allies and neighbours' (Scottish Government, 2019: 1). This metaphor of friendship marks a less proximal relationship than its nation-as-family counterpart of the British discourse, which is indicative of the SNP's constitutional values as a self-determining nation, regardless of its constitutional relation to the UK as a devolved or independent nation. Accordingly, the SNP's aim does not appear to be linked to dismantling the Union as much as it has to do with asserting Scottish nationhood in effort to dismantle Westminster's unitary political agenda in Brexit and beyond.

Overall, the analysed Scottish discourse of nationhood aims to construe a narrative of belonging that is disassociated and aims to transform the established image of a British nation to one in which Scotland is a nation in a UK union. In this, the SNP constructs a civic Scottish nationhood that is predicated directly on its civic-democratic values coupled with more vague references to history and its constitutional tradition, all of which are distinct from the Union. This draws parallels to the theoretical conception of the Four Nations view as concerned with the plural

British dimensions that frame the thesis. Accordingly, the SNP's national imaginary is distinct from the UK, even if the two run parallel.

4.2.2. 'A better solution for our country' – on Brexit

The construction of a Scottish nationhood that is fundamentally distinct and separate from Britain is reinforced in the SNP's framing of Brexit as a distinct non-Scottish phenomenon, with the aim of emphasising 'the variation in the referendum result across the UK' (Scottish Government, 2019: 14). To this end, the official Scottish opposition to Brexit is reinforced in the government white papers by an explicit transformation strategy that sees the established idea of 'Brexit' – i.e. British exit – transformed into a narrative of 'EU exit'. This discourse feature omits 'Britain' as the initiating agent of the exit and, by implication, also de-emphasises Scotland as a responsible actor. This scope allows for the explicit disputing of Brexit by explicitly asserting that Scotland is being acted upon, an othering strategy that lies at the heart of the SNP's discourse of Brexit.

Accordingly, the SNP draws upon a normative frame in its construction of Brexit, which is directly linked to the SNP's identified ideological values in relation to Scotland's status in the UK and its democratic deficit. In this, Brexit is illegitimated based on the central narrative that 'Scotland' – in its familiar personified form – 'despite its vote to remain in the EU, faces EU exit against its will' (Scottish Government, 2019: 13). The SNP employs Brexit in this frame as a device to reinforce the notion of a democratic deficit at the centre, which denies the personified Scotland its distinct will. There is a subtle, yet important, difference between this expressed will by Scotland (as a person) contrary to the demonstrated plural 'wishes of the people of Scotland' in this regard (SNP, 2019: 14), the former alluding to the majority's settled dissent with Brexit. An example of the latter reference to Scotland's plural will suggests that '[a] majority of the people in Scotland voted to remain in the EU – but even many of those who voted to leave have real concerns about the extreme Brexit now being pursued' (SNP, 2017: 3). By referencing the 'many' of those who voted for Brexit as also being opposed to Westminster's approach, the SNP reinforces the illegitimacy of Brexit in Scotland. Such argumentum ad populum is crafted to fundamentally counter the British cherry-picking

strategy and to implicitly assert the Scottish Government as the protector of Scotland's interests in Brexit (and beyond).

Yet, the acknowledgement of its Leave voters also serves another purpose; that is, to reinforce the illegitimacy of the distinct 'Tory Brexit' as opposed to one that considers Scottish interests (SNP, 2019: 6), a strategy that is reminiscent of the familiar antagonism of the Conservatives against which Scotland is continuously framed. Given (some of) the negative connotations attached to the nickname Tory, it is not striking that the SNP prefers such reference to the Conservatives as such to denote the party's Anglo-British traditionalism (Seawright, 2010). Along these lines, the SNP also makes frequent use of a range of collocations, which construct a direct link between Brexit and the antagonised Westminster, marking the SNP's distance from the Conservatives' politics ('chaotic Brexit-obsessed Westminster', 'Brexit-dominated Westminster politics').

The metonymous use of 'Westminster' to reference the central government is also an implicit means of establishing distance to the 'faceless institution firmly located in the territory of the Other' (Breeze, 2019: 53). The detachment of the distal Westminster from the proximal Scotland ('here') is reinforced by the rhetorical question, 'Who will decide Scotland's future – Westminster leaders like Boris Johnson or the people who live here?' (SNP, 2019: 6). The passage highlights the core of the SNP's argument in opposition to Brexit, i.e. the grievances stemming from the democratic deficit in which 'Scotland is governed from Westminster by governments that … are often in office with only a small proportion of the vote in Scotland' (Scottish Government, 2019: 17). The image clearly states the locus of political, and even representational, struggles in a London controlled UK Parliament that is distal to the Scottish nation and acts against 'the interests of the people of Scotland' (SNP, 2019: 16). This misalignment between the interests of Westminster contra Scotland justify the SNP's rejection of Brexit and calls for an IndyRef2.

Accordingly, the topos of governance, in which 'a particular style of governance is presumed to cause/eliminate problems' is particularly prominent in the Scottish discourse on Brexit (Prentice, 2010: 426). An example suggests that '[t]he chaos of Brexit has exposed just how

dysfunctional Westminster really is' (SNP, 2019: 4). That is to say that Brexit is not constructed as the trigger of these issues; it is its handling that has created a rift. The centralised style of government is, thus, deemed defunct in light of Brexit, as is realised by a range of animating verbs, and which is reinforced by a topos of abuse of authority. For instance, the UK Government metaphorically 'impose', 'trample', 'force', 'betray', and they 'refuse', 'block' and 'ignore' Scottish interests. At the core of these predications is the metaphorical image of a UK Government that has 'launched a power grab on Holyrood under the guise of Brexit' (ibid., 7), which draws lines to and justifies the 'Scotland's future in Scotland's hands' metaphor as a necessity to retain its devolved power. Such predications and imaginary deliberately construct Westminster as abusive: Scotland is essentially being ruled by an 'undemocratic' central government that forces Scotland into an 'unwanted' Brexit. The marked implications imply that Scotland is metaphorically being 'dragged out of the EU against our will' (ibid., 40). Or, in other instances, a hostage-held Scotland that asserts agency in its aim to 'escape Brexit' and to 'stop Brexit and escape from the chaos' (ibid., 2; 24). These examples invoke and personify the democratic deficit, arguing that the only possible way to change 'the assault on basic democratic processes by the Tory Brexiteers' is to break away from Westminster's defined oppression (ibid., 43).

The dissociative argument is reinforced by the use of locus terribilis to narrate the perceived consequences of Brexit 'as a disaster for Scotland' (SNP, 2019: 6). Or, on another occasion, that 'Brexit will bring uncertainty' (SNP, 2017: 14). Accordingly, Brexit is framed by means of overt negative attributions that predicate Brexit as 'damaging' and 'catastrophic' to Scotland's state of affairs coupled with pejorative verb predicates that animate along these lines ('crashing', 'imposing', 'threating'). To this end, Brexit is framed by a topos of threat on the condition that 'if there are specific dangers or threats, one should do something against them' (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: 77). Thus, the driving narrative suggests that 'Brexit … threatens catastrophic harm' (SNP, 2019: 39), which justifies the SNP's calls for independence as an alternative. Accordingly, the rejection of Brexit strategically encourages voting for the SNP as a

response to this abuse to allow a 'democratic mandate' in which the 'the people of Scotland have a choice about their future' (SNP, 2017: 8). In this light, the unwanted nature of Brexit in Scotland appears to be tactically utilised by the SNP to trigger a second IndyRef.

This becomes further evident when considering the SNP's critique of the UK Government's 2018 white paper on Brexit as a 'vague set of aspirations' to which there is 'a better alternative' (Scottish Government, 2018: 17). Interestingly, the Scottish Government counters the UK's strategic vagueness by arguing that '[n]either a bad deal nor no deal are acceptable' (ibid., 19). Yet, its own proposal for Scotland's place in Europe is equally vague, flagging only 'our desire to act in solidarity with our neighbours' (ibid., 18). The Scottish strategy on Brexit appears to be based more on placing blame on Westminster than on its actual objective of 'coalescing around the pressing need for a change of approach' (ibid.). In light of the overwhelming antagonisation of Westminster, the discourse on Brexit appears to be, at its core, a device to justify the SNP's calls for an IndyRef2 by means of the democratic deficit.

4.2.3. 'The material change of circumstances' – on IndyRef2

With Brexit being a 'material change of circumstance' from the first independence referendum (Scottish Government, 2019: 11), the primacy of this topos of changed circumstance firmly places Brexit at the heart of Scotland's constitutional status. An IndyRef2 is, thus, justified by the topos of reality, which conditions that 'because reality is as it is, a specific action/decision should be performed/made' (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: 79). To paraphrase, since Brexit poses a material change of circumstance,

> the people living in Scotland should ... be asked to reconsider the future of their country, in line with the manifesto commitments in the 2016 Scottish elections and the 2017 and, most recently, 2019 Westminster elections. These votes provide a clear mandate to the current Scottish Government (Scottish Government, 2019: 16).

This fundamentally disputes the Conservatives' (2017) suggestion that an IndyRef2 'is not what the Scottish people want' (32). Accordingly, the Scottish discourse is constructed around a normative frame of

democracy, aiming to legitimise another IndyRef by means of its explicit reference to a 'democratic mandate for an independence reference … which already exists' (SNP, 2017: 8). This presupposes that the SNP's majority translates into support for an IndyRef, which is plausible but not actually given. What is certain is that such line of argumentation counters the British cherry-picking that was found to rely heavily on the results of the first IndyRef with no attention to the defined change of circumstance.

The Scottish normative narrative of a democratic mandate is often coupled with narrative tropes embedded in a vox populi argument with reference to the already familiar 'democratic voice of Scotland' (Scottish Government, 2019: 3). Such metaphor of a metonymic Scotland collectivises the voice of its people in the construction of a personified Scotland that is 'living the ideals of democracy: to have a place and the freedom to speak its mind' (Soule and Leith, 2011: 71-2). It appears that the Scottish Government exists at the heart of Scotland (as a person): 'The [Scottish] Parliament is the democratic voice of Scotland, and the inheritor of the Scottish constitutional tradition' (Scottish Government, 2019: 22). Thus, the few references to 'our people's voice' and the 'democratic voice of the people of Scotland' employed in the texts are effectively side lined in favour of the metonymic and personified Scotland with the Scottish Government at its heart. One reason for this is the defined difference between the constitutional traditions of the Scottish and the UK governments, the former based on 'limited rather than the absolute form of authority, with the right to rule being subject to the consent of the people' in Scotland (ibid., 5) The Scottish discourse implicitly employs a topos of governance to argue that the Scottish Parliament speaks on behalf of its people. This, of course, implies that the central government, by virtue of its constitutional tradition, does not. Accordingly, there is not necessarily one will of the people of Scotland, yet Scotland has a single democratic voice in the Scottish Parliament.

The IndyRef2 is contextually framed as an end in itself to 'escape Brexit' (SNP, 2019: 2). This entails an emphasis on autonomy and independence as a means to overcome the heteronomy of the British state. The dissociative argument that narrates a Scottish democratic deficit

takes its simplest form in the already-mentioned refrain 'Scotland's future in Scotland's hands', which implies that Scotland is taking back its future from Westminster. This catchphrase is based on intertextual links to the *Yes Scotland* campaign in the first IndyRef. Not only does the phrase evoke a distinct Scottish identity in suggesting that Scotland is a strong collective body capable of taking hold of its own destiny, it also implies that Scotland's past and present was and is out of the people of Scotland's metaphorical hands. In short, the SNP contends that Scotland needs an IndyRef because Scotland is a nation with a civic society and something of a self-governing state apparatus that is interested in its distinct interests. At the core, the British government no longer represents these interests as made evident by Brexit. An IndyRef2 is, in this light, an end in itself to give Scotland its voice back.

The Scottish discourse also pays extensive attention to an IndyRef as a means to an end. This is rooted in the topos of a better place, which imagines an idealised independent Scotland: 'The best future for Scotland is to be an independent, European nation … because it allows Scotland to become the open, tolerant, inclusive and democratic nation we are determined to build' (SNP, 2019: 22). Accordingly, one of the most commonly cited justifications for an IndyRef2 is the achievement of political sovereignty as a means to its civic-democratic ideals: 'As an independent Scotland, we can build a fairer, more inclusive society – where everyone feels valued, human rights are respected and we properly support vulnerable people and tackle poverty' (SNP, 2019: 8). This emphasis on a necessary difference between now and the future is also realised by means of a range of positive evaluations that mark 'fairness, dignity and respect at its heart, shaped by … the people of Scotland' (SNP, 2017: 36). The literary trope 'Scotland's future in Scotland's hands', again, perpetuates such central rationale, in which this particular incarnation of the personification metaphor asserts Scotland as an active agent in its own affairs (SNP, 2017: 5).

Interestingly, this dissociative argument implicitly transforms Scotland from being British to an 'independent European nation' (SNP, 2019: 2). This implies an implicit topos of difference to what would be expected from a future within the UK: 'If Westminster maintains control over

Scotland, major changes which could profoundly damage this and future generations will be imposed without our consent .... We believe people in Scotland have the right to choose between Westminster control and becoming an independent country' (ibid., 8). In this case, an independent Scotland is the ideal appearance as dissociated from the practical reality of the (predominantly English) government in Westminster. At the heart of the Scottish discourse is, therefore, a need for independence because the British government no longer represents Scottish interests. Accordingly, Scottish independence is framed as the best future for Scotland; albeit a future that the people of Scotland are to make for themselves. At its core, the transformation strategy is based on the image of a better future for Scotland, which legitimises an IndyRef as the resolution to the democratic deficit rooted in the British one nation unitary narrative.

4.3. Concluding remarks

In summary, the contrasting (identity) political and constitutional positions between the main British and Scottish parties are disputed along the theoretical dichotomy between a 'fifth nation' discourse of unity contrasted with a 'Four Nations' approach to the plural British dimensions. Table 4.2. illustrates how the identified British and Scottish discourses relate to the earlier outlined theoretical aspects of national identity.

Theoretical	Empirical	
Aspect of national identity	*Britain*	*Scotland*
Imagined national community	Britain as a fifth nation with one collective British people	Scotland as a historical nation with a civic people of Scotland
Imagined (union) state community	The UK as a unitary state with a sovereign parliament	The UK as a union state with national devolved parliaments
Imagined political/cultural other, excluding EU	Scottish nationalists in the Scottish Government, the SNP	English nationalists in the UK Government, the Conservatives
Imagined historical consciousness and political past	One-nation British history based on a mythical government and unified political union	Plural British dimensions based on a distinct Scottish history and constitutional tradition

Imagined political present and future	Continued British political community post-Brexit; rejection of Scottish independence	Independent Scottish political community; rejection of Brexit

Table 4.2. Theoretical dimensions of British and Scottish political discourses of national identity

Overall, whereas the British discourse pays extensive attention to the idea of British unity in the frame of Britain as a unitary state, the Scottish discourse effectively asserts itself as a distinct nation by means of an explicit assertion of difference. Thus, the examined political discourses on Brexit and Scottish independence appear to be scripted in relation to their contextual understandings of the UK's nation/state character, which drives the discourses of either continuity or a break with the Union. Brexit and Scottish independence are, arguably, reactions against the erosions of their own perceived national unity, and the SNP and the Conservatives script the opposing politics in antagonistic frames to make this point. In this sense, Brexit appears to be a tale of two, if not three, referenda.

The analysis reveals that the British one-nation default manifests in a power hierarchy between the devolved and the central governments that silences Britain's plural political, historical and cultural landscapes in the dominant British narratives. What allows for these systematic misalignments is that identity, whether national or state-based, is imagined with no a priori definition. Being imagined, experienced and dynamic, their characters can be and are continually debated. The current findings illustrate the inherent complexities and contradictions rampant in ideological ideas about the UK's character. Thus, Britain can be considered a discursive construction that is shaped in and by the nation/state dichotomy. It matters whether the UK is interpreted – or indeed constructed – as a unitary or a Union state. Such insight questions how the theoretical character of the UK is discursively as well as strategically constructed and perpetuated in the politics of Brexit and Scottish independence and perhaps in academic interpretations hereof. These issues exist in a wider structural power continuum rooted in the UK's political culture.

Chapter Five

Discussing the future of UK politics – a Brexistential crisis or the constitutional moment?

Recent years have seen much debate about the state of the United Kingdom, with the SNP and Conservatives participating in a more established discourse of identity political crisis that has taken various forms since the 1980s, and which has gained renewed momentum with devolution. Along these lines, Aughey (2010) has identified a pervasive sense of 'endism' in academic literature, with reference to the generation of scholars that has argued that Britain is on the verge of a break-up (e.g. Nairn, 1977). The issue with such 'fashion in academic interpretation', he has argued, is a dramatization of dissolution that is 'discursively inventive, historically debatable and (as yet) historically unproven' (27), which goes to the heart of the methodological argument developed in the preceding pages. Therefore, whilst disunion is not unlikely in light of the analysed SNP discourse, it is just as plausible that the IndyRef debates and Brexit are 'climactic moments' that have the potential to collectively cultivate the end of the UK state in its current form (Moran, 2019: 69).

With the outlined unitary political culture bound to place further strain on the already tense relationship between Westminster and Scotland, one question to ask is whether Brexit will prove to be the predicted beginning of a disuniting kingdom, or if it has the potential to become the Union's constitutional moment at last. This is likely to be determined by the extent to which the UK government shows flexible in relation to Scotland's rejection of Brexit. Along these lines, this final chapter discusses the Union's future. Before turning to the discussion about the extent to

which Brexit might force a redrawing of the Union's political and constitutional architecture, the chapter commences in a brief discussion about the utterly changing contemporary Scottish politics that is likely to be the tip of the scale between a break-up of the Union or a reconfiguration of the British state as we know it.

5.1. The future of Scottish politics

Scottish politics is far from some remote politics north of the border; it goes to the very heart of the power dimensions of the British state and is largely a product hereof as was argued in an earlier chapter. 21st century Scottish nationalism is considerably influenced by Nairn's (1977) dual assumptions that Anglo-British traditions in Westminster tend to harbour dogmatic, if not even regressive and anti-liberal, sentiments, and that England can only regain its sense of ideal national sovereignty with the dissolution of the UK state (Jackson, 2014). Brexit seems to have heightened this affinity, driving its democratic deficit back to the very front of Scotland's independence debate. To this end, it is not unjustified to suggest that 'Scotland remains the biggest factor in any political breakdown of the United Kingdom' (Nairn, 2003: xx); or, at least, that the nation is the biggest determiner of its future, not least because Scottish politics is in the midst of fundamental change, a process that started with the establishment of Scotland's government, and which has accelerated with the IndyRef and Brexit and in light of the SNP's electoral success.

Scotland's political and constitutional journey is informed by a rather distinctive nationalism, permeated by the SNP's leftist critique of the imperial British state coupled with the party's social democratic ambitions and a post-national logic that assumes a set of civic aspirations that do not by default necessitate unionism as a binary opposite to nationalism (Jackson, 2014). In this light, the idea that devolution is 'a process not an event' is particularly central to the debate about Scotland's constitutional future, not least because debates about devolution now appear to be divided between those who are overall content with the status quo of the settlement and those who want further devolution, if not even independence, rather than over its merits. The appeal of the SNP's progressive

ideology has proven strong in Scotland, leaving its political map overwhelmingly yellow with only pockets of the struggling Conservatives and a Labour Party that used to dominate Scottish politics.

It appears that the established parties that are committed to the British state have increasingly lost their footing in the Scottish political climate in the face of Westminster and its relative neglect of the otherwise successful devolution settlement (Hassan, 2011). Brexit appears to have further distanced Westminster's political classes from Scotland. The SNP, contrarily, has not only flourished but also professionalised with devolution, first in opposition, then in government, with the party's success now extending beyond Holyrood to also include appeal in the Westminster elections. The relative strength of the SNP was demonstrated with its demand for independence, which led to the 2014 IndyRef, and despite the unionist victory, its win was narrower than initially predicted (Kidd and Petrie, 2016). Despite the declaration that the question was settled for 'a generation', Brexit has strengthened the SNP's demand for independence, especially in the context of messy negotiations and threats of a no deal Brexit. The SNP's relative support in Scotland has also been marked at a time where none of the most prominent politicians, e.g. Boris Johnson (18%) and Jeremy Corbyn (14%), are as trusted as much as Nicola Sturgeon (46%) in Scotland (YouGov, 2019). This new political environment is significantly different from what observers are used to. How these trends pan out post-Brexit is a matter for the 2021 Scottish Parliament elections to decide.

Whilst the direction of Scottish politics and society is inevitably pointing towards a continued evolution of Scotland as a distinct political community, it does not mean that independence is the default way to regain power to Scotland, however. In fact, Scottish support for independence has continually been weaker than its rejection of Brexit, even if there is some evidence that the outcome of the withdrawal has the potential to affect support for independence (Greene et al., 2017). A recent YouGov (2020) survey has suggested that support is only narrowly tipping towards a prospect for an independent Scotland, and mostly in light of the messy Brexit negotiations, with support for independence now being

more strongly linked with Europhile attitudes (Curtice and Montagu, 2018). Despite these trends, however, polls suggest that there is no immediate support for a second IndyRef in the next years (YouGov, 2020). In this sense, the question about independence is likely to boil down to whether the heightened political awareness that Brexit initiated will persist for a longer period of time, or if it will die down when Brexit becomes a thing of the past. Regardless, it appears that Brexit has changed the debate about independence, especially in light of the dominant UK state.

With the question about independence up in the air, it makes sense to consider the alternative to a Scottish divorce from the Union. What runs parallel to the SNP's identified post-national and civic understandings of identity in the previous chapters, which have helped the SNP's case that Scotland is different and should be governed accordingly, is the party's gradualist embracing of a progressive post-sovereign idea of statehood (Hassan, 2011). Such political culture seems to be taking speed already in light of the extending devolved powers. What describes the aims of the SNP and the wider Scottish nationalist movement just as much as the ideal of independence is the emphasis on a pooling of sovereignty and of flexibility and fluidity of governance. Such post-nationalist thought even includes a role for unionist politics through a wider social British union that allows for political cooperation (ibid.). Assuming maximum devolution as an alternative suggests that independence is not really about splitting Scotland from the UK but rather is about maximising its political influence. The moderate ideology has gained significant interest in Scotland with devolution, and it has allowed the SNP to expose the doctrinaire views of the central British government and to critique the democratic deficits with an alternative at hand. What is at the SNP's soul – its modus operandi – is, perhaps even more than the idea of independence, the achievement of Scottish statehood in Gellnerian terms (Jackson, 2014); independence is merely a means to this end, which is why the future of Scottish politics perhaps comes down to realigning the nation with the state, regardless of its constitutional status.

The post-national view seems to indicate that Scottish nationalism has reinvented and developed from a traditional sense of nationalism,

aiming to break free from the British state, to a more contemporary form of nationalism based on rationality and pragmatism. It indicates that devolution has transformed the political landscape of Scotland and has given its nationalists a new dawn. In this sense, the Scottish Government has successfully realised some of the cornerstones of a new Scottish politics that will likely be central for the British state to acknowledge for the Union not to drift apart. That is especially the case under the leadership of the majority Conservative Government, a leadership that is considered illegitimate in Scotland as an expression of a democratic deficit and its apparent attachment to a narrow and doctrinaire view of Britishness.

Judging by the analysed political discourse and the SNP's relative success, a defining confrontation is more a matter of when, not if. The SNP has argued that it has the mandate to hold another IndyRef on the basis of Brexit – 'the material change of circumstance' – and the 2019 General Election, because their campaigns vigorously asserted that a vote for the SNP is an endorsement of their position that the people of Scotland have the right to choose their own future – and that it is for the Scottish Parliament and not Westminster to decide when that referendum will be held. Yet, even if the underlying assumptions of the Scottish debate is that Scottish independence and the future of the British state is solely down to the people of Scotland, that is only the partial story. In another sense, there is a much wider content and environment that shapes and affects where Scottish opinions sit: Westminster.

5.2. The future of British politics

Whilst Scotland's changing politics has altered Britain, it has apparently not changed or altered the perceptions of those at the apex of the British political class, whether they be politicians, media or, indeed, academics. This makes the prospect for radical change more likely, rather than unlikely, with Brexit having returned the SNP's demand for independence to the forefront of Scottish politics as a reaction against the Westminster sovereigntists, who believe that the unitary state is indissoluble. Whilst the eras of imperial and post-war British politics allowed for such 'inarticulateness' of 'unthinking unionism' (Rose, 1982: 1), i.e. a tacit

acceptance of the status quo, that is becoming increasingly inadequate for the theorisation of the contemporary political state, which includes devolution as a serious participant to the unitary experience. Perhaps, Brexit as a marker of the shift of status quo has the power to shape the future of the UK by challenging the doctrinaire views of British (nation) statehood.

This new era of a British political and identity crisis is likely to provide agendas of research for the new millennium. In short, the UK's plural politics have returned with remarkable speed since the 1960s, and they have accelerated with devolution, culminating – at least for now – with Brexit. For this reason, British one nation narratives have questionable theoretical weight, especially with Englishness being an increasingly integral actor in the broader populist outlook. Seawright (2010), indicatively, posed the question 'One nation, but Which?' and argued that the Conservative Party has aimed to construct itself as '*the* party of the nation and the nation state … symbolic of … One Nation', the English, without being ripe to devolution, Europe or the English Question (199). Remaining unresolved, these challenges have promoted a political crisis 'brought about by the declining faith in the viability of pre-existing understandings of the constitution, the nation and territorial governance' (Kenny, 2015: 36). In other words, with changes in national consciousness affecting the state and vice versa, one plausible reality is that the oneness of the UK is being complicated not only by Scottish nationalism but by the reluctance of Westminster's political class to accommodate new Scottish politics and, by implication, the devolved realities of the (Anglo-)British state.

Much of this thinking, made specific to the UK, is indebted to Nairn's (1977) *The Break-up of Britain,* with its focus on the character of the British states and its hierarchies within. One chapter argued that the idea of absolute sovereignty held and exerted by the British state has been enduring a fundamental crisis for decades; that these are the 'twilight' days of 'the British state' (1). Whilst there is much debate about the potential end of the UK, the core of the argument has much explanatory value for the current crisis in Britain's political experience. Nairn (1977) made the case that '[t]he conservative account which has always insisted on the system's uniqueness is in reality a mythology and has been an

important ideological arm of the state itself' (4). In other words, what is fundamental to the current workings of the British political culture is exactly the unreformed nature of a British state that never fully democratised and instead retained feudal relics and practices. The lack of a modernising revolution allowed an elitist political culture alongside the continuation of autocratic powers like the Crown Prerogative and the House of Lords. On this account, Jackson (2014) has suggested that 'the unreformed British state remains essentially an imperial state, suffused with the style and fripperies of empire' (51). In other words, no radical reconstruction of the British state has taken place – so far; Brexit might change that. Nairn (1977) foresaw that Europe, an 'empire-surrogate' (45), would challenge the unconstructed idea of the British state, since it presented a different idea about the state, its society and sovereignty that struck the heart of Westminster sovereigntists.

At the same time, it is widely argued that Britain has been submerged into its biggest component in England, failing to establish a truly equal union. Whilst there are varying accounts of the extent to which the future will see increasing English dimensions within the Union since such move would likely weaken the Union (Mitchell, 2011), the national voices within the UK have become increasingly pronounced (in England too). Whilst Eurosceptic debates have largely been driven by English concerns, with UKIP and Nigel Farage giving a voice to an Anglo-British sense of 'retro-nostalgia' for the British nation that was (Kenny, 2017), devolution has allowed Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to sit in different political spaces from Westminster with different kinds of politics, at least in Scotland. The issue lies not in these differences per se, but perhaps more in how they are (mis)represented in Westminster's political culture.

Nairn's (1997) suggestion that 'emergence from the crisis demands a political break', arguably, still holds truth (34). Yet, it might not result in the endist break of the Union that he initially predicted. Others have argued to the contrary that Brexit is likely to mark a major constitutional change due to the potential rise of considerable constitutional uncertainty, partly linked to its uncodified constitution, and partly because Brexit has highlighted weaknesses over the devolution settlement.

Currently, there is no regulation in place over the relationship between the central government and the devolved bodies because the codified framework provided by European law will remove the glue holding the two together. Bogdanor (2019) has argued that Brexit, rather than triggering the break-up of Britain, has the potential to expose the UK constitutional nakedness in a way that might legitimately prove a catalyst for a written constitution and a reconfiguration of the British state that can tackle the democratic deficit and asymmetrical structures between the nations.

Several Scottish scenarios are possible in this regard, with different expressions of statehood, federalism, sovereignty association and, of course, full independence being plausible (Mitchell, 2011). All of these, apart from the traditional idea of independence, would co-exist with some kind of institutional arrangements and connection to a pan-British political system. At the core, any such change will be dependent on the rest of the UK, most notably the problematic issue of English attachment to the idea of the unitary state politics. The latter is the most problematic sticking point for the potential remaking and reconfiguration of UK politics.

5.3. Concluding remarks

There appears to be a grounded idea that '"after Britain" is already with us or, if not, the break-up of Britain is advanced and will accelerate' (Robbins, 2005: 1096). Such after Britain-reflections of a millennial UK, however, seem to miss that it has yet to unravel, and that Britishness is declining but not obsolete. Just as researchers should not assume Britain as the default analytical focus, a break-up might not be the only prognosis for the Union's future since Scottish nationalism is not as black and white as often assumed. Instead, a changing Scottish politics appears to be revealing the issues of the nature of the British state in its efforts to pave the way for a potential pan-British conservation about the British state, its institutions and the values that it embodies. It has opened for debate about how to democratise the UK through a more modern and pluralist notion of sovereignty and power. To this end, calls for independence in

light of Brexit might have less to do with the Union than it does with how Westminster is conducting Scotland's interests.

Much of what is considered in this final chapter is obviously speculative. The evidence for the imminent break-up remains uncertain, though it is not to be dismissed in light of Brexit. Yet, Brexit might also have the capacity to reconfigure the UK's constitutional and political set up. It might force Westminster's political classes to accommodate its new realities of Scottish/devolved politics and entrench these dimensions into its political culture beyond convention. The future of Scotland in this regard is for Scotland to decide at a potential referendum. Critical will be political pluralism, intellectual ballast and the wider political agenda of the established British political parties and the Scottish nationalist movement, spearheaded by the SNP.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

The preceding pages have considered how Brexit informs the fundamental academic and political challenges of assuming a British identity politics in an age of devolution and Scottish nationalism. In developing a critique of Brexit as a UK-wide phenomenon by means of a combined theoretical and empirical approach, these chapters have argued that such one-legged unitary approach to UK politics risks sketching an inaccurate image of the Union's contemporary plural character. In fact, with internal divergencies over Brexit being symptomatic of a wider political and identity crisis that boils down to divergent understandings of the UK's nation/state character, it matters whether 'Britain' is theoretically and empirically conceptualised as a unitary one-nation state or as a cultural-political union state, not least because it affects the extent to which the devolved realities and deeply rooted historical national divergencies are acknowledged in Brexit.

In drawing theoretical conclusions, the thesis confirms that academic interpretations of Brexit Britain mirror a wider unitary one-nation political discourse. Thus, whether Brexit is considered a British phenomenon in and by the political sciences, arguably, depends on the extent to which academic interest presupposes that the UK is a theoretical, yet arguably fallacious, fifth nation. Assuming an exclusive academic interest in a centralised politics appears to perpetuate a biased Anglo-British nation statehood that disregards the nation/state fault lines between Westminster and the devolved nations and their respective identities. By failing to acknowledge the Union's plural realities, political scientists implicitly contribute to the legitimisation of the unitary one-nation direction in

Brexit and beyond. This has particular consequences in relation to Scotland because the nation's sense of identity and political self-awareness is strong and tends to be defined in opposition to Westminster and its Anglo-British bias. In fact, recognising that the UK is rather a union state, shaped by the plural dimensions of the Four Nations view, reveals Brexit as a predominantly English phenomenon. This diverts the presumed legitimacy away from a centralised politics to the diverging devolved interests. Hence, extending the theoretical toolbox with a deeper consciousness of the four nations' separate and intertwined histories, cultures and politics will better equip researchers to approach the Union's contemporary plural character and schisms.

In identifying how British and Scottish political discourses frame Brexit and an IndyRef2 around their respective imagined communities, the empirical analysis reveals remarkable parallels to the theoretical fifth nation and Four Nations approaches, respectively. Accordingly, Brexit appears to have compelled the UK's overlapping imagined communities to restate their supposed national boundaries through articulations of either a continuation or a break with the UK state. Underlying these discursive patterns is a significant antagonisation of the respective political opponents, which are reproduced as means to delineate the imagined community and its perceived political centre in either Westminster or Holyrood. The findings suggest that British and Scottish discourses of Brexit and Scottish independence are widely scripted in and by their respective imagined communities as markers of their ideal national futures. Brexit and an IndyRef2 are strategically utilised in parallel with the theoretical frames as means to competing ends of national unity, in which the respective legitimised and idealised futures are contrasted with the illegitimate proposals by their political antagonists. It appears that the content and boundaries of the imagined community affects the identity politics that are politically pursued, the types of national futures endorsed, and how actions and processes are considered legitimate or illegitimate. Thus, the nature of the UK can also be considered a discursive construction shaped in and by the conceptual nation/state fault lines.

The identified nation/state divisions are symptomatic of a deeper identity and political crisis that has been exasperated by Brexit, and which is not unlikely to lead to an IndyRef2. Thus, with the progressive Scottish devolved politics beginning to clash with the unconstructed character of Westminster in light of devolution, Brexit might make it necessary to re-draw the architecture of the Union to avoid its break-up. Whether it will trigger a fundamental change to the constitutional setup with increasing levels of devolution, or if a break-up is likely in light of the SNP's calls for independence, is for the future to tell. Evident is that the UK is unlikely to survive Brexit and a potential IndyRef2 in its current form.

Some final remarks should be noted. Firstly, whilst the thesis has posited that mainstream academic interpretations of Brexit mirror the dominant one nation unitary British political discourse, it does not claim that there are necessarily any causalities between academic interest and political processes. Instead, the study has identified some parallel and synchronous themes that bring to the surface a range of systematic asymmetries in the UK's political culture, with the aim of opening up and advancing academic discussions about its changing and increasingly conflictive character in the 21st century. Secondly, the analysis is purposefully not representative because of the demonstratory scope and limited extent of the thesis. Such constraints invite further analysis of the conceptual/contextual-discursive framework, perhaps coupled with larger, more systematic and quantitative corpora. Another potential focus for future research is the identified exclusionary practices. If the EU is the defined Other in discourses of British unity (e.g. Meislova, 2019), then such pattern may run parallel to the SNP's identified discursive antagonisation of Westminster. It may be hypothesised that the nature of UK politics is predicated on othering, or that British and Scottish governments are fighting similar battles with Brexit and the IndyRef against a perceived supranational body over claims to a sovereign nationhood.

At last, the point of proposing a redrawing of the theoretical generalisations of the UK's character in Brexit and beyond is not to suggest that Westminster politics are unimportant, nor that devolution should be the primary frame in Brexit. It is to say that Britain should not be analysed as

a nation nor as a stand-alone concept because it exists in a symbiotic, yet conflictive, relationship with the devolved nations and their identities. Accordingly, the devolved scales, whether they be Scottish, Welsh, Irish or (partly) English should be recognised as agents with their own interests in Brexit and not simply as problematic features of a theoretically nation-alised Anglo-British politics. There is little new to this latter assertion in itself; yet, it might be within these national conflicts that Brexit is hindered – and where the solution to the Union's 21st century political and identity crisis can be found.

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