

## **Nationalism, party political discourse and Scottish independence: comparing discursive visions of Scotland's constitutional status**

### **Abstract**

This article critically examines the predominant narratives which emanated from party political discourse in relation to the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. Utilising a methodological approach centring on political discourse analysis (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012), this paper analyses party manifestos and constitutional policy documents produced by the three largest political parties represented in the Scottish Parliament, namely the pro-independence Scottish National Party and two pro-union parties, Scottish Labour and the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party. The emergent discourse of each party is interrogated by drawing upon pertinent theoretical concepts from previous academic analyses of Scottish nationalism, with particular attention given to those which have deployed modernist and ethnosymbolist theoretical approaches when analysing the Scottish context. This facilitates a critical reflection on the contrasting and nuanced narratives of the Scottish nation's past and future espoused by each political party vis-à-vis modernist and ethnosymbolist theory, illustrating the ways in which contrasting theorisations of nationalism are empirically tangible within political discourse, and are thus not simply theoretical abstractions.

**Key words:** Scottish nationalism, Scottish independence, political discourse, ethnosymbolism, modernism

## **Introduction**

As argued in the seminal work of Kedourie (1960), nationalism, as a political ideology, can provide the means by which societies can achieve self-determination, a central ideology of global societal organisation (Smith 2010). Following Kedourie's 'ideological modernist' logic, it is therefore the development of nationalism as an ideological doctrine to achieve self-determination which leads to the development of nation-states, rather than nationalism emerging as the by-product of an existing state system as emphasised in the 'political' modernist approach of Breuilly (1993) and Giddens (1985). Kedourie (1960: 73) states that this nationalist doctrine "divides humanity into separate and distinct nations, claims that such nations must constitute sovereign states, and asserts that the members of a nation reach freedom and fulfilment by cultivating the peculiar identity of their own nation". The ideological power of nationalist doctrine therefore explains the hegemonic position of the nation-state as the unit of global political organisation, given that it is the medium through which individuals can achieve self-determination for the social collective they align with emotionally (Kedourie 1960).

However, the case of Scotland provides a complex analytical challenge in relation to these theoretical conceptualisations, and others, outlined in Smith's (2010) influential typology of nationalism. Although the 'nation-state' acts as the fundamental starting point for 'modernist' theoretical analyses, Scotland is a prime example of a 'submerged nation' given its status within the wider state system of the UK. Inhabitants of 'submerged nations' such as Scotland have been argued to possess a tangible awareness of its existence as a distinct 'nation' on a social, cultural and political level, despite the nation's lack of parallel representation in terms of sovereign statehood (Guibernau 1995). The lack of congruence

between Scotland's 'nationhood' and 'statehood' therefore presents an interesting dimension to any application of the major paradigmatic approaches of nationalism. Whilst the idea of a Scottish nation can be argued to have pre-modern historical foundations, thus providing support to adherents of a perennialist or primordialist perspective, contrasting arguments have been made concerning the constructed and romanticised nature of Scottish nationalism and identity (McCrone 1992; Trevor-Roper 2008), lending weight to the contentions of the modernist and ethnosymbolist paradigms, the two predominant approaches used to study the case of Scotland (Soule, Leith and Steven 2012).

The focus of the following discussion therefore considers the central tenets of the predominant paradigmatic approaches deployed in the study of nationalism for the case of Scotland, modernism and ethnosymbolism, before applying pertinent elements from these theoretical approaches to critically examine the contrasting and nuanced narratives of the Scottish nation's past and future espoused by the largest political parties in Scotland, the pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP) and two pro-union parties, Scottish Labour and the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party. In particular, the existing academic literature on the history of Scottish nationalism acts as a basis for examining the historical roots upon which political, ideological and discursive positions regarding the historical development of the Scottish nation are founded.

Furthermore, the specific methodological approach of this study, and its use of Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) political discourse analysis framework, endeavours to offer an original methodological contribution to the study of Scottish nationalism. This methodological approach allows for a focused analysis of empirical data in the form of political manifesto and policy document discourse, thus facilitating an opportunity to

critically examine the ways in which the lexicon of political rhetoric in contemporary Scotland is shaped by the ideological position of each political party in relation to Scotland's constitutional status. To this end, the discussion aims to illustrate the ways in which contrasting theorisations of nationalism are empirically tangible within political discourse, rather than solely a theoretical abstraction. The article also explores the relationship between nationalism as both theory and ideology within the discursive construction of Scottish sovereignty, illustrating the empirical and theoretical contradictions within the political discourse of these contrasting parties during the 2014 independence referendum debate.

## **Modernism, Ethnosymbolism, and Contemporary Scottish Political Discourse**

### *Modernism in the Scottish Context*

'Modernist' theorisations of nationalism have been predominant in literature in this academic field, and this is reflected in the academic study of Scottish nationalism (Soule, Leith and Steven 2012). Although modernist approaches to Scottish nationalism do not object to the argument of perennialists and primordialists that Scotland existed as an independent kingdom or territory in the pre-modern era, they argue that Scotland would not be referred to as a 'nation' until concepts such as the nation, nationalism and national identity became prevalent in the modern era.

Two of the main adherents to the 'socioeconomic' variant of modernist thought, Nairn (1977) and Hechter (1975), paid particular attention to the case of Scotland, identifying economic and social inequality between Scotland and England as the catalyst for Scottish nationalist movements. For Nairn (1977), 'uneven development' in Britain after the Act of Union led to

Scotland becoming a peripheral territory in comparison to the core territory of England. The divisive nature of this socioeconomic cleavage lies at the core of Nairn's 'Break Up of Britain' thesis which predicted the ultimate secession of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland from the UK. Hechter's (1975) conceptualisation of the inclusion of the 'Celtic periphery' within the UK as a form of 'internal colonialism' reflects a number of Nairn's arguments about the status of Scotland as a socioeconomic 'periphery', although expressed in slightly different terms. Hechter places more emphasis on the 'cultural division of labour' as a stimulus for nationalist agitation, as the peripheral population begins to react to its under-representation in positions of influence in the Scottish economy and polity by pursuing a sovereign state to redress this inequality.

However, the approaches of Nairn and Hechter are somewhat undermined by their lack of acknowledgement of the economic and social benefits of Scotland's status within the British Empire (Harvie, 1998; Jackson, 2014). Once political stability had been secured within the UK, Scotland's economic development was accelerated significantly as a direct result of its status in the British Empire. Although Hechter's conceptualisation of 'internal colonialism' acknowledges that the Celtic periphery became centrally involved in the process of British imperial expansion, any acceptance of the mutually beneficial nature of the Union for Scotland and England undermines the strength of the 'colonial' representation of Scotland (Dalle Mulle, 2016; Mycock, 2012; Sharp et al., 2014).

The position adopted by Kedourie (1960) in his 'ideological' modernist approach is also of relevance for the nature of contemporary Scottish nationalism, given his arguments that the final goal of nationalist movements tends to be the establishment of sovereign statehood. Kedourie's position differs with the arguments of 'political modernists' such as Giddens

(1985) and Breuilly (1993) that contend a nation must have a concurrent state for its political expression, instead arguing that the establishment of the state can be a future goal of a nationalist movement. Whilst the distinction between ‘political’ modernists (i.e. Breuilly and Giddens) and the identification of Kedourie (1960) as an ‘ideological’ modernist arguably fails to fully appreciate the tautological nature of separating the political and ideological elements of nationalism, it can be argued that the existence of nations as the predominant mode of societal organisation simultaneously depends upon and promulgates the ideology of nationalism (Breuilly 1993; Smith 2010). The cyclical argument that nations would not exist without nationalism, but that nationalism would not exist without the development of nations, demonstrates that separating the ‘political’ and ‘ideological’ positions fails to acknowledge the complex symbiotic relationship between these theoretical positions, encapsulated in Malesevic’s (2010, 2013) arguments regarding the ‘centrifugal ideologization’ of nationalism as a political ideology.

In the case of Scotland, support for Kedourie’s arguments can be found in the shifting aims of Scottish political nationalist movements, given that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries these movements predominantly supported the cause of ‘home rule’ within the Union rather than full political independence (Dalle Mulle 2016; Harvie 1998). The goal of these movements was to increase Scotland’s political powers, rather than to achieve the full sovereign statehood. This stance offers the possibility of redressing the ‘democratic deficit’ which has been argued to impact political representation for the Scottish electorate (Dalle Mulle 2016; Ichijo 2009; Leith and Soule 2011; Mycock 2012). The extensive work of Harvie (1998) on the historical development of Scottish nationalism lends support to Kedourie’s arguments, arguing that the central development in Scottish political nationalism has been a growing acceptance of the need for Scottish political representation. Mycock

(2012) also argues that the SNP's political strategy focuses on the ideals of Scottish political self-determination, aligning with the 'ideological' brand of modernism found in Kedourie's theorisations, whilst synthesising Kedourie's arguments with Hechter's 'internal colonialism' thesis to contend that the SNP's strategy can thus be linked back to a 'post-colonial narrative' of Scottish independence.

### *Ethnosymbolism in the Scottish Context*

Similarly, adherents to an 'ethnosymbolist' perspective, such as Armstrong (1982), Hutchinson (1994) and Smith (1986, 2010), have often acknowledged the need to synthesise ideas from the modernist, perennialist and primordialist theorisations of nationalism. Such an approach is arguably important in the case of the 'old' nations such as Scotland identified in perennialist approaches to nationalism as it can help avoid the theoretical challenges facing these paradigms by accommodating the existence of both historic and recently formed nations.

For Smith (1986, 2010), Scottish nationalism is part of an 'ethnic revival' which bases its foundational claims on notions of a Scottish 'ethnie' that provides cultural, political and emotional solidarity for nationalist movements. This stance asserts that Scottish nationalism sought to contend its absorption within the dominant British state, whilst catering for the varied demands of Scottish nationalist movements regarding the extent of cultural and political autonomy, whether devolutionist or separatist. Unsurprisingly, Smith's emphasis on the existence of a singular Scottish 'ethnie' is blighted by the same issues facing 'perennialist' and 'primordialist' paradigms in relation to the multi-ethnic ancient history of Scotland. However, he attempts to qualify such arguments by stating that the concept of an

‘ethnie’ exemplifies an ideal-type, and that the importance of ethnies lies in their ability to act as foundations for ethnic solidarity and myths of ancestry, acknowledging that their actual origins may not be as simplistic as popular beliefs suggest (Smith 2010).

Although some theorists have argued that the ‘when’ of a nation’s origins is often indistinguishable (Connor 2004), the historicity of the nation as a concept carries significant analytical utility for the applied study of a particular nation’s development, especially where ambiguity exists as regards its historic origins as is the case for Scotland. Indeed, the empirical and theoretical challenges in tackling the debate on the historicity has indeed fostered the ongoing theoretical disjunctures between ethnosymbolists such as Armstrong, Hutchison and Smith and the ‘modernist’ theorists outlined above. Furthermore, even for ‘radical modernists’ such as Connor (1994, 2004) whose contentions about the salience of ‘ethnonationalism’ partially accommodate the arguments of ethnosymbolists regarding the emotional importance of pre-modern ethnic roots for the success of modern nationalist movements (Connor 1994; Malesevic 2013; Smith 2004), the difficulties of empirically resolving the question of whether nations are a purely modern phenomenon means that the ethnosymbolist perspective approach remains a highly influential theoretical approach.

Despite these theoretical contentions, Leith and Soule (2011) are unequivocal regarding their adherence to an ethnosymbolist perspective in their analysis of contemporary Scottish political discourse. To this end, Leith and Soule counter the modernist position that Scottish nationalist myths and symbols are simply modern social constructions, regardless of whether their associated mythology is indeed embellished. They instead suggest that the balanced view of pre-modern Scottish mythology advocated in their ethnosymbolist position facilitates an appreciation of the nuanced nature of nationalist discourse construction, arguing that

‘those wishing to employ particular narratives for political purposes must do so within a symbolic repertoire accessible to those they wish to persuade’ (Leith and Soule 2011: 10). Ichijo’s (2004) analysis of the political stance of the SNP towards Europe similarly adopts the ethnosymbolist theoretical approach of Leith and Soule (2011), providing a critical insight into the rhetorical position of the party with regards to the origin of the Scottish nation and European integration. She argues that the SNP draws upon the notion that Scotland is a nation with a pre-modern and pre-Union history, stating that ‘[t]he fact that the Scottish National Party subscribes to the medieval origin of Scottish nationhood is not surprising since it strengthens their claim of the authenticity of the Scottish nationhood’ (ibid: 32).

### *The Discourse of Contemporary Scottish Nationalism*

Attention now turns to considering recent trends in the discourse of contemporary Scottish nationalism exploring the findings of recent academic reflections on the emergent patterns of party political discourse regarding the Scottish constitutional arrangements. Leith and Soule’s (2011) work provides an analysis of the discourse contained in the manifestos of mainstream Scottish political parties allowing for a consideration of the emphasis placed on ‘civic’ and ‘non-civic’ nationalism. Their analysis identifies that the majority of discourse found in Scottish political manifestos stresses the civic nature of Scottish nationalism and society, although, nonetheless, certain elements of ‘non-civic’ nationalism are evident in Scottish political discourse, with emphasis often placed on the importance of landscape and language as a source of pride. However, their analysis demonstrates the predominance of civic nationalism claiming that ‘Unionist and Nationalist together eulogise the progressive and “welcoming” nature of the nation; this is the dual voice of a modernist democratic

nationalism expressing its distinctive, unique character, but the nature of that character is an open, civic and inclusive plurality' (ibid: 73).

These arguments are echoed in Mycock's (2012) analysis of the SNP's attempts to project a 'wholly civic' form of contemporary Scottish political nationalism. He argues that their rhetorical position attempts to promote an inclusive form of Scottish nationalism, irrespective of birthplace, ethnicity and race. However, this is often undermined by certain policies and speeches which draw upon ideas of a distinctly Scottish culture, history and heritage which reflect a more 'ethnic' brand of nationalism. Therefore, these analyses of contemporary discourse do not indicate the complete lack of non-civic or exclusive nationalist discourse in Scottish politics or society, aligning with other studies of Scottish national identity which highlight the continued importance of ethnic markers of Scottish identity (McCrone and Bechhofer 2010).

Leith and Soule (2011)'s analysis of the nature of contemporary political nationalism and political discourse in Scotland has also identified a shift towards an acceptance of 'small 'n' nationalism' by Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives in Scotland:

...nationalism with a small 'n' refers to the political behaviour of all major parties in Scotland, whilst Nationalists with a capital 'N' refers only to parties who seek a fully independent Scotland, i.e. the SNP... unionist arguments for Scotland's continued incorporation within the UK state are made in the 'interest' of Scotland and as such are nationalist with a small 'n'. (ibid: 13)

Ichijo (2009, 2012) suggests that this development marks the entrenchment of 'unionist nationalism' in post-devolution Scottish politics, with all three unionist parties presenting alternative visions of the role of devolution in securing the future status of the Union. She argues that the introduction of Scottish devolution has legitimised the expression of a unionist stance in the Scottish political sphere:

By presenting a discursive frame that connects three narrative strands, (a) the Union is where Scots can grow and prosper, (b) devolution is an embodiment of democratic principles and (c) devolution is the only way of maintaining the Union, the unionist politicians have bundled the Union, devolution and Scottish identity together and wrapped it with democratic legitimacy, the trump card in a modern liberal democracy (2012: 28)

Echoing the arguments of Leith and Soule (2011), Ichijo argues that the potentially exclusionary nature of Scottish nationalist discourse is tempered by espousing a stance that modern Scottish nationhood is of a civic and multicultural form. Ichijo (2004) concludes that this stance is the result of three recurrent views relating to the status of Scotland within Europe:

First, Europe is seen as a means of achieving more autonomy or independence for Scotland, and for this, Europe is good for Scotland... Second, Europe is a space where a more just Scotland is possible... Third, Europe is seen as a substitute for the British Empire. (ibid: 148-149)

This increasingly outward-looking and open conceptualisation of Scottish nationalism is therefore also reflected in the recent pro-European discourse of the SNP towards the issue of European political integration (Dardanelli and Mitchell 2014; Sharp et al. 2014), acting as a key facet of contemporary pro-independence political discourse. However, such a position regarding the status of an independent Scotland within the European Union also highlights the complex relationship between political nationalism and the notion of sovereignty in the contemporary, globalised world, given that membership of supra-national political organisations such as the EU ultimately involves a complex and nuanced appreciation of the limits of political sovereignty and self-determination with such geo-political institutions (Dalle Mulle 2016; Ichijo 2004).

### *Summary*

Building on the aforementioned work of Leith and Soule (2011), Ichijo (2012) and Mycock (2012), which all adopted similar empirically-informed methodological approaches when appraising the official discourse of political parties, the forthcoming discussion will make an additional original contribution by critically examining how the lexicon of political rhetoric in contemporary Scotland is shaped by the ideological position of each political party in relation to Scotland's constitutional status. Furthermore, the use of Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) political discourse analysis framework seeks to offer an original methodological approach to the study of Scottish nationalism to complement past empirical analyses of political rhetoric in Scotland such as Leith and Soule (2011), given that the current analysis focuses specifically on political discourse from the period leading into the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. In particular, specific consideration will be given to

the alignment of Scottish political parties with contrasting modernist and ethnosymbolist conceptualisations of the Scottish nation during this period.

## **Methodology**

The methodological approach adopted in this study draws upon one specific analytical framework for political discourse proposed by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012). This framework represents the most recent substantive development of Norman Fairclough's previous work situated within the wider school of critical discourse analysis (CDA). This framework's distinction from past versions of CDA consists of the use of argumentation theory, with the authors contending that the proposed framework 'views political discourse as primarily a form of argumentation, and as involving more specifically *practical* argumentation, argumentation for or against particular ways of acting' (ibid: 1; original emphasis).

As part of their analytical framework, Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) identify a number of structured features which emerge as part of effective political argumentation. Figure 1 illustrates the foundations of their proposed approach for analysing the structure of practical arguments:

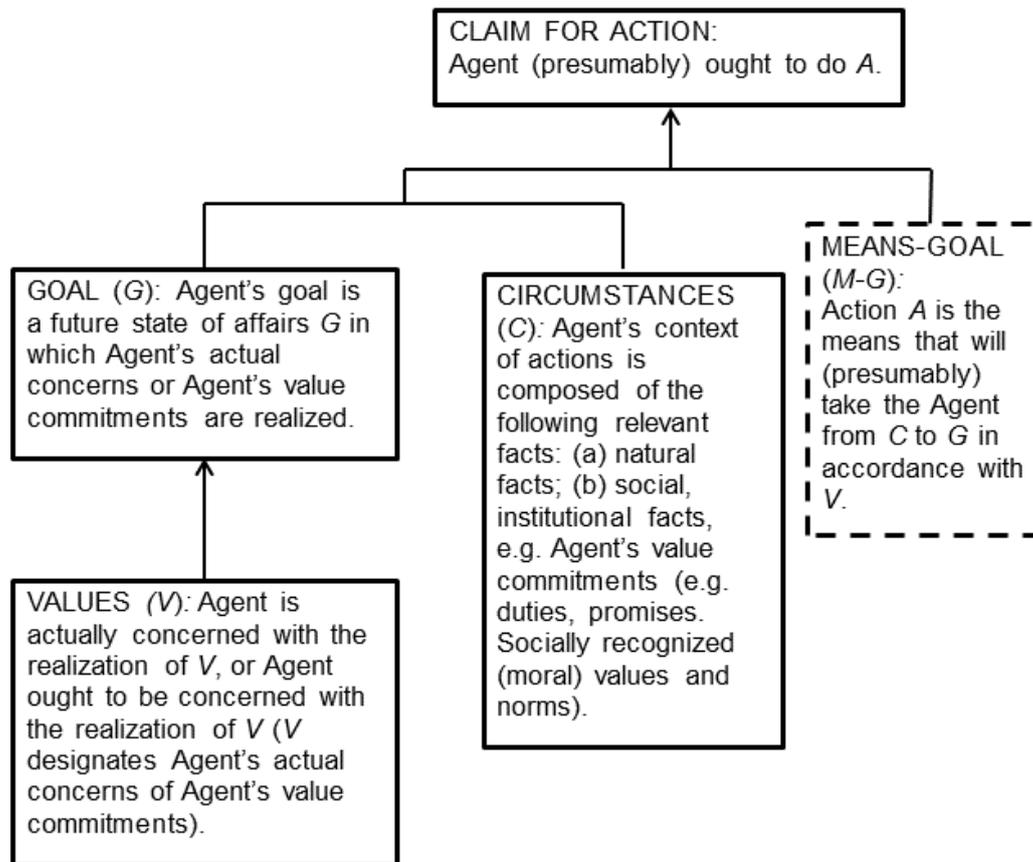


Figure 1 – Diagrammatic representation of the structure of practical reasoning (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012: 48)

Within this conceptualisation of practical argumentation, a claim for a specific course of political 'action' is primarily driven by the normative political and ideological 'values' of an actor or group, with these 'values' in turn shaping the particular political 'goal' of the respective actor or group. These 'goal premises' are represented in discursive form as an 'imaginary' of a future state of affairs. The course of action argued for is therefore viewed as a 'means-goal', with the specific action representing a means to an end for achieving a political imaginary. Although secondary in terms of their importance in this framework, the 'circumstances' represented in a particular argument are still conceptualised as influential in justifying a course of action and contextualising the current state of affairs.

Applying this logic to the current study, the character of representations of the past, present and future of Scotland's constitutional status in the discourse of selected Scottish political parties is scrutinised. Given that Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) argue that 'imaginaries' acts as the catalyst for argumentation in political discourse, an analysis of the contrasting representations evident within discourse from across the Scottish political spectrum provides a means for analysing the 'goals', 'values' and ideologies of each respective party. The 'circumstantial premises' thus constitute a representation of a particular set of past or present circumstances; in turn, this representation is used to contextualise a particular argument for future political action, or 'imaginary'. The specific methodological approach of this study, and its use of Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) political discourse analysis framework, endeavours to offer an original methodological contribution to the study of Scottish nationalism rooting its arguments in the official discourse of political parties. This conceptual approach also facilitates an opportunity to critically examine the contrasting conceptualisations of nationalism, sovereignty and political ideology evident within the past 'circumstantial premises' and the future 'imaginaries' and 'goal premises' of each political party.

Election manifestos and policy documents which related specifically to the independence referendum acted as the data sample for analysis of each party's discourse on Scotland's constitutional status and future. Given the potentially vast and unmanageable array of potential data sources from each party relating to the independence referendum, the specific focus on political manifestos and constitutional policy documents allowed for a more precise analysis of the most detailed, rich sources of information on each party's position on the Scottish constitutional debate. This also mirrored the methods used in other recent studies of

Scottish political discourse, such as that of Leith and Soule (2011). Each data source was uploaded into the NVivo qualitative data analysis software package to manually code the content of each data source, with an open coding system used to identify emergent themes, followed by an axial coding process which sought to categorise these lower-level codes into higher-level discursive forms using the framework proposed by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012).

The sample allowed for reflection on the political discourse leading into the 2011 Scottish Parliamentary elections, whilst equally allowing for the inclusion of pre-referendum political discourse from the fourth sitting of the Scottish Parliament preceding the independence referendum. It is acknowledged that this decision precluded the opportunity to explore the shifting constitutional ‘imaginaries’ of the respective parties in the post-referendum period, given the need for parties to respond to the ‘No’ vote in the referendum. However, it was decided that the exclusion of post-referendum discourse would ensure that the emergent patterns reflected the nature of the discourse during the actual period of the referendum with greater fidelity.

### **Contemporary Political Discourse and Narratives of Scotland’s Constitutional Status**

#### *The SNP and Scotland’s Constitutional Status – ‘Scotland’s Future in Scotland’s Hands’?*

Discussion commences with a consideration of the emergent discursive patterns within the SNP’s publications and manifestos specifically relating to Scotland’s constitutional status (SNP 2011, 2012, 2014; Scottish Government 2013). Figure 2 provides a diagrammatic

representation of the SNP's political discourse on Scotland's constitutional status, applying the Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) framework's core analytical categories:

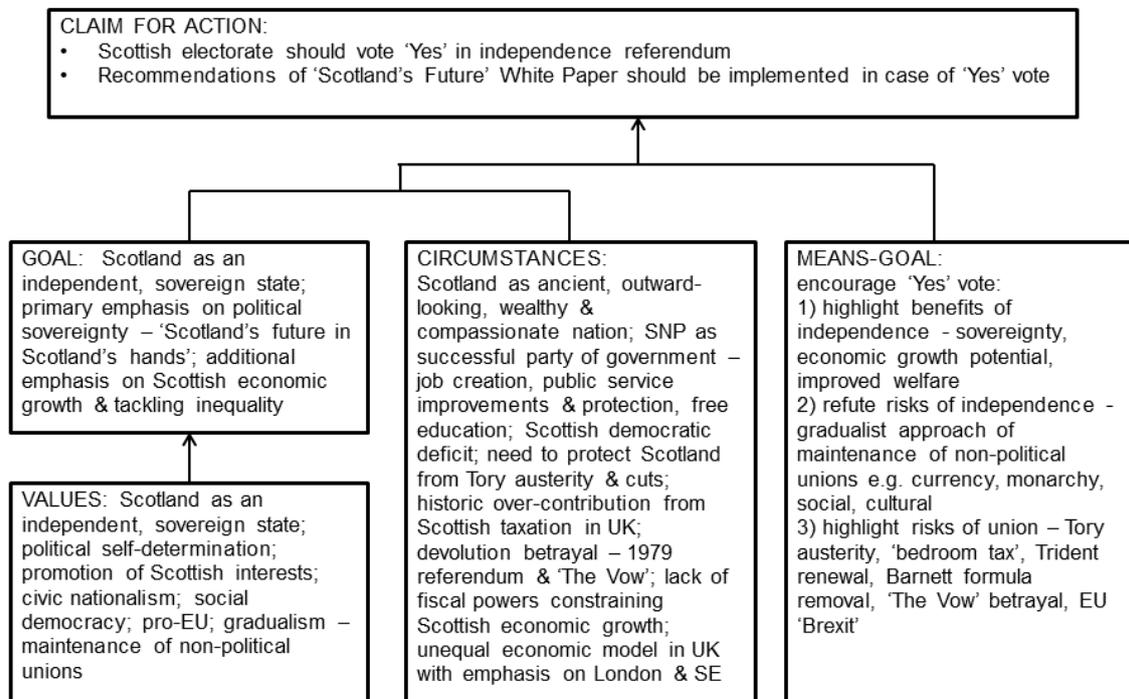


Figure 2 - Diagrammatic representation of SNP political discourse regarding Scotland's constitutional status

Analysis of the emergent discourse of the SNP on this issue provides an opportunity to explore the party's ideological stance and its rationale for supporting Scottish independence. The first emergent narrative is an overt attempt to refer to Scotland as an ancient, outward-looking, wealthy and compassionate nation:

Scotland is an ancient nation, renowned for the ingenuity and creativity of our people, the breathtaking beauty of our land and the brilliance of our scholars.  
(Scottish Government 2013: ix)

If we vote for independence, the eyes of the world will be on Scotland as our ancient nation emerges – again – as an independent country. (Scottish Government 2013: 3)

This narrative appears to be part of a strategy to construct Scotland as a nation with a deep-rooted historical foundation, with phrases referring to the nation as ‘ancient’ and the ‘beauty of our land’ resonating strongly with ethnosymbolist conceptualisations of the Scottish nation, as well as the modernist arguments of Connor (1994) on ‘ethnonationalism’ regarding the emotional salience of such language. These narrative tropes of a historic Scottish nation with abundant physical resources and human potential are then juxtaposed with the circumstances which followed the 1707 Act of Union, with Scotland constrained by a Westminster parliament which fails to prioritise Scottish interests sufficiently:

Under the Westminster system Scotland is treated as a regional economy within the UK. Our ability to meet future challenges and seize opportunities is constrained and many major decisions are taken by Westminster. (Scottish Government 2013: 7)

Furthermore, the ‘circumstances’ of Scotland’s status within the Union are frequently argued by the SNP to be afflicted by an unequal economic model which prioritises a ‘core’ of the economy in the form of London and south-east England. This position therefore problematises the status quo, resonating with some of the arguments presented in Hechter’s (1975) ‘internal colonialism’ thesis regarding the asymmetry between ‘core’ and ‘peripheral’

regions within the UK, yet avoiding the extremism of Hechter's terminology by omitting terms such as 'colony' to describe Scotland. This portrayal of Scotland's constraints within the unequal UK economic model is also frequently juxtaposed with one of the SNP's central circumstantial justifications for Scottish independence – a core narrative highlighting the historic over-contribution of Scottish taxation per capita due to North Sea oil revenues (Harvie 1998; Leith and Steven 2010).

The final central theme in the SNP's discursive construction of Scotland's 'circumstances' is the frequent emphasis on the Scottish 'democratic deficit', with Scotland portrayed as a submerged nation which lacks the political and fiscal powers to flourish. This narrative evokes the arguments of Kedourie (1960) and his conceptualisation of the 'ideological' form of nationalism which emphasises political self-determination, and provides further justification for arguments regarding the centrality of such arguments in the SNP's political strategy (Casanas Adam 2014; Dalle Mulle 2016; Mycock 2012). Emphasis is placed on the negative impact on Scotland of a 'Tory' government at Westminster, elected without the consent of the Scottish electorate, and the risks of 'Tory austerity', past and future, blamed for hampering Scottish economic growth and leading to greater inequality.

These circumstantial premises are thus forwarded as justification for eradicating the central problem of the Scottish 'democratic deficit' through the achievement of political independence, thereby providing the 'successful' SNP government with the additional legislative, fiscal and economic levers to ensure that Scotland can flourish as an independent nation. Despite the promise of additional powers for the Scottish Parliament delivered through the 2012 Scotland Act and the pre-referendum devolution proposals from pro-union parties, their potential to act as a sufficient solution for the Scottish 'democratic deficit' is

disputed by the SNP through an emphasis on a 'betrayal narrative' in relation to past devolution proposals (Harvie 1998).

The discursive construction of Scotland's 'circumstances' can be directly linked to the SNP's ideological 'values' in relation to Scotland's constitutional status, with a core narrative being the SNP's belief in the importance of 'Scotland's future in Scotland's hands':

We believe it is fundamentally better for our nation if decisions about Scotland's future and Scotland's successes are taken by the people who care most about Scotland – that is by the people of Scotland. (Scottish National Party, 2012: 6)

Independence means that Scotland's future will be in our own hands. Decisions currently taken for Scotland at Westminster will instead be taken by the people of Scotland. (Scottish Government, 2013: 3)

The primacy of this message demonstrates an overt attempt to equate the party's belief in Scottish independence with a core desire for the principle of Scottish political sovereignty. This discursive strategy again demonstrates clear synergies in the work of adherents of 'ideological' modernist theorisations of nationalism (Smith 2010). For example, Kedourie (1960) highlights the ideological power of nationalist doctrine which emphasises that the nation-state is the medium through which individuals can achieve sovereignty and self-determination for the social collective with which they align (Ichijo, 2009). The SNP's stance in relation to European integration serves to underline the SNP's pro-European position, echoing the arguments of Ichijo (2004) and Dardanelli and Mitchell (2014). It also

acts a further device to reinforce the notion of the Scottish ‘democratic deficit’ through its portrayal of the risk of EU withdrawal taking place against the wishes of the Scottish electorate:

If we remain in the UK, the Conservative Party’s promise of an in/out referendum on EU membership raises the serious possibility that Scotland will be forced to leave the EU against the wishes of the people of Scotland. (Scottish Government, 2013: 60)

The final emergent ideological ‘value’ in the SNP’s political discourse is an emphasis on a ‘gradualist’ form of political nationalism. For example, the ‘Edinburgh Agreement’ ruled out the proposal for a second question in the referendum for further devolution powers, despite the popularity of such an option in past analyses of public opinion (Casanas Adam 2014; Dalle Mulle 2016; Sharp et al. 2014). This appeared to suggest a strategic move by the SNP to combine the possibilities of a ‘gradualist’ or ‘independence-lite’ form of political nationalism whilst retaining the ‘separatist’ position offered in their preference for independence for Scotland, supporting the arguments of previous analyses (Casanas Adam 2014; Leith and Soule 2011; Leith and Steven 2010). Furthermore, whilst the White Paper undoubtedly advocates the creation of an independent, sovereign Scottish state, significant emphasis is placed on portraying a ‘Yes’ vote as the severing only of the ‘political’ union with the UK, with other non-political unions being maintained:

We will continue to be linked to other nations of the UK by five continuing unions: the EU; an ongoing Union of the Crowns; a Sterling Area; and as members of the NATO defence union. And the social union, made up of

connections of family, history, culture and language, will have every opportunity to flourish and strengthen. (Scottish Government 2013: 215)

This conceptualisation of Scottish independence therefore accepts that a ‘Yes’ vote would not result in a fully sovereign Scottish state. Instead the party accepts that a significant degree of political and economic sovereignty would be ceded to other political institutions such as the EU, NATO and the Bank of England as partners in these continuing ‘unions’ (Casanas Adam 2014; Sharp et al. 2014). However, this ideological position within the SNP’s discourse illustrates the inherent contradictions between contemporary political nationalism in Scotland, framed within the notion of a ‘democratic deficit’, and the limited political sovereignty and self-determination possible within such geo-political institutions, thus resonating the arguments of Ichijo (2004), Dardanelli and Mitchell (2014) and Dalle Mulle (2016) on this issue.

Nonetheless, given that the *raison d’être* of the SNP is the achievement of the party’s ‘imaginary’ of Scottish independence, it is unsurprising that the party’s ‘goal’ is the establishment of an independent, sovereign Scottish state, despite the aforementioned limitations on the extent of this sovereignty. However, although Scottish independence may represent an end in itself for numerous SNP supporters, the party’s discourse places greater emphasis on Scottish independence as a means to an end. For example, the most commonly-cited reason for independence in the sample considered here is the achievement of political sovereignty for Scotland, with the emphasis on the ‘Scotland’s future in Scotland’s hands’ narrative frequently perpetuated as the central rationale for Scottish independence and resolving the ‘democratic deficit’ (Dalle Mulle 2016; Ichijo 2009; Leith and Soule 2011;

Mycock 2012; Pittock 2008). This is closely followed by a secondary emphasis on using these newly-gained levers of Scottish independence to achieve economic growth for Scotland, with considerable emphasis in the White Paper on proposed economic and fiscal interventions in an independent Scotland (Sharp et al. 2014). The ‘claim for action’ to achieve this ‘goal’ proposed in the SNP’s political discourse therefore involves encouraging the Scottish electorate to vote ‘Yes’ in the referendum, portraying this as an endorsement of the SNP’s proposals for Scottish independence in the White Paper.

*The Scottish Labour Party and Scotland’s Constitutional Status – ‘The Best of Both Worlds’?*

Analysis of pro-union discourse parties commences with the Scottish Labour Party (Labour henceforth), the largest pro-union party in terms of MSPs at the time of the referendum.

Figure 3 provides a diagrammatic representation of Labour’s political discourse regarding Scotland’s constitutional status (Labour Party 2014; Scottish Labour 2011, 2014a, 2014b):

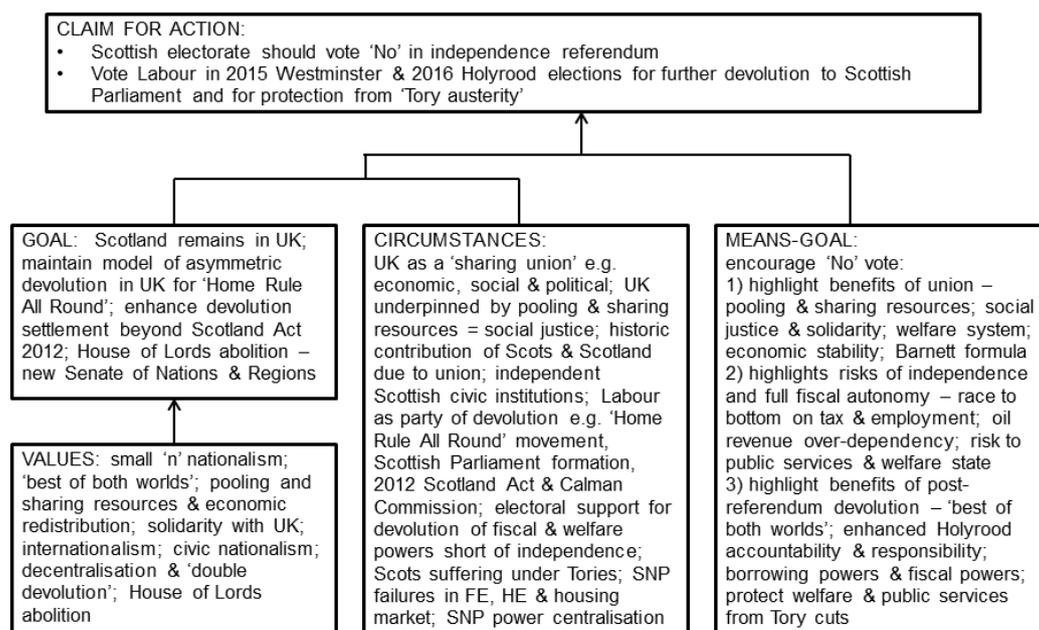


Figure 3 - Diagrammatic representation of Scottish Labour Party political discourse regarding Scotland's constitutional status

Unsurprisingly, the emergent themes in Labour's discourse with respect to the past and present 'circumstances' of Scotland and the UK contrast starkly with those of the pro-independence SNP, with Labour describing the UK and the status of Scotland within the UK in almost entirely positive terms. The predominant recurring theme in Labour's discourse is the description of the UK as a 'sharing union':

The UK is a "sharing union", with economic, social, and political aspects, in which risks and rewards are collectively pooled. These three aspects are interconnected: political union means we can have an integrated economy and a single currency. (Scottish Labour Party, 2014a: 11)

The sharply contrasting descriptions of the UK in the discourse of Labour and the SNP can be argued to represent a semantic battle over connotations of the word 'union'. For example, Labour imbue the phrase 'union' with a range of economic, social and political benefits for Scotland, while the SNP's discursive strategy attempts to portray the 'union' as a restrictive state of affairs for Scotland politically and economically, despite accepting the desirability of other 'unions' relating to currency, socio-cultural relations and the monarchy for an independent Scotland. Indeed, Labour explicitly criticise the SNP's independence proposals in light of this semantic contest:

This sharing union is incompatible with the SNP's vision of independence. The SNP has attempted to adopt the language of social union, but their conception of

what this entails is so shallow as to be all but meaningless. (Scottish Labour Party, 2014a: 11)

Labour's narrative of the 'pooling and sharing of resources' therefore appears to have a dual purpose. Firstly, it again emphasises the positives of the union for Scotland by stressing the economic security gained from the UK (Sharp et al. 2014), while, secondly, the 'pooling and sharing of resources' trope underlines a vision of the UK which aligns with Labour's ideological values of 'unionist nationalism' (Ichijo 2012). Furthermore, Labour's explicit support for the Union evident here can also be viewed as an implicit form of nationalist ideology, or 'state patriotism' in the words of Connor (1994) emphasising the importance of maintaining the British state through the 'sharing union'. This illustrates that the ideological positions of unionist parties in Scotland involves a complex attempt to accommodate competing nationalisms (Scottish, British and European), as well as varying degrees of sovereignty in line with these competing planes of political operation.

Labour's discursive construction of the historical development of Scotland also demonstrates the party's pro-union stance. In stark contrast to the SNP's ethnosymbolist conceptualisation of Scotland as an ancient, outward-looking, wealthy and compassionate nation which pre-dates the modern era, Labour's references to the historical development of Scotland are restricted to the post-union era from 1707 onwards. Labour's portrayal of the historical 'circumstances' of Scotland therefore emphasise that the country's achievements are intertwined with those of the UK as a whole:

The UK is a union of equals and partnership. We have over 300 years of shared experience, history and joint endeavour. The UK family of nations – Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland – have achieved so much together. (Scottish Labour Party, 2014a: 32)

The absence of references to Scottish history which predate the Act of Union is symptomatic of an alignment with ‘modernist’ conceptualisations of nationalism, with Scotland solely referred to as a constituent nation within the nation-state of the UK. This discursive strategy resonates with the arguments of ‘political’ modernists such as Breuilly (1993) and Giddens (1985) given the emphasis on the 1707 Act of Union and the emergence of the sovereign state of the UK as the medium for political organisation and success for Scotland, whilst facilitating an independent Scottish civil society in line with arguments of McCrone (1992) and Pittock (2008). In contrast, the emphasis on the ‘union of equals and partnership’ counters the arguments of ‘socioeconomic’ modernist interpretations of Scottish nationalism such as those of Nairn (1977) and Hechter (1975), given the dismissal of arguments regarding economic and political asymmetry between the nations constituting the UK.

However, Labour’s discourse also attempts to strike a balance by expressing pride in the historic achievements and values of Scotland as a distinct nation within the UK, while reiterating the benefits of union. This attempt to portray Labour politicians and supporters as both patriotic Scots in cultural terms and internationalist in ideological terms provides further support for Leith and Soule’s (2011) analysis of the embracing of ‘small ‘n’ nationalism’ by the pro-union Scottish parties. Labour’s embracing of ‘small ‘n’ nationalism’, or ‘unionist nationalism’ to use Ichijo’s (2012) description, is also illustrated in the party’s core strategy

entailing an emphasis on the potential for further powers for Scotland within the 'circumstances' of the union. This is also evident in the party's self-descriptive narrative which portrays Labour as 'the party of devolution':

Scottish Labour is a party of both devolution and the union. For over 100 years, Labour has led the argument for Scottish devolution within the union, and it is a cause we have advanced out of deep-seated conviction. (Scottish Labour Party, 2014a: 2)

The party's embrace of devolution is evident in both the aforementioned self-proclaimed narrative of Labour as the 'party of devolution' and the core theme of the union offering the 'best of both worlds' to Scotland:

By having a Scottish Parliament with the powers to make decisions that affect our day-to-day lives here in Scotland, such as health and education, we can have the best of both worlds. A strong Scotland within a safe and secure United Kingdom... As part of the United Kingdom, Scotland stands taller, speaks louder and has more influence. (Scottish Labour Party, 2014b: 53)

The 'best of both worlds' narrative in Labour's discourse also offered an opportunity for the party to reiterate its core belief in the redistribution of wealth and progressive, social-democratic policies (Leith and Soule 2011; Wheatley et al. 2014). The prevalence of the 'sharing union' characterisation was used to advance Labour's arguments regarding the

‘sharing and pooling of resources’, thus couching the party’s stance on Scotland’s constitutional status within a wider ideological value set of social justice, solidarity with disadvantaged communities elsewhere in the UK, and broader internationalist ideals:

As we write the next chapter of Scotland’s story, we do so considering not borders and identity, but values and ideas. Internationalism is a fundamental Labour value. Our pursuit of equality, fairness and social justice goes well beyond the borders of Scotland and the United Kingdom. (Scottish Labour Party, 2014b: 52)

Labour’s emphasis on the party’s outward-looking, internationalist ‘values’ therefore suggests an alignment with the principles of a civic form of nationalism, echoing both the findings of Leith and Soule (2011) as well as the discourse of the SNP. However, Labour’s discourse explicitly refutes the attempts of the pro-independence parties to commandeer the language of civic nationalism, claiming that the strategy of nationalists is to foster an exclusive (although not necessarily ethnic) sense of Scottishness:

...they [nationalists] want to create a more exclusively Scottish sense of national identity, in an attempt to substitute the allegiances which already unite British people together. (Scottish Labour Party, 2014a: 212)

Furthermore, Labour’s criticisms were extended the performance of the SNP-led Scottish Government, constructing a narrative of present ‘circumstances’ which aimed to undermine

the SNP's attempts to illustrate its competence to govern an independent Scotland (Dardanelli and Mitchell 2014; Leith and Soule 2011).

The aforementioned ideological 'values' of Labour's discourse unsurprisingly led to an overarching 'goal' of ensuring that Scotland remains within the UK. In order to achieve this 'goal', the party's discourse appears to again embrace the importance of devolution in its 'imaginary' for the long-term stability of the union, with significant emphasis being placed on Labour's arguments for the maintenance of a model of asymmetric devolution in the UK. Labour's embracing of 'small 'n' nationalism' (Leith and Soule 2011) in its discourse is particularly evidenced by the party's frequent expression of a goal of 'home rule all round':

...we take the view that the preference should be for home rule all round and the Scottish Parliament ought to be funded by an appropriate balance of UK taxes, which give effect to social solidarity, and its own tax resources. (Scottish Labour Party, 2014a: 65)

Labour therefore placed emphasis on the need for an enhanced Scottish devolution settlement beyond that which was agreed by the Calman Commission and the resultant Scotland Act 2012. The party therefore used its pre-referendum discourse to highlight a willingness to revisit the Scottish constitutional settlement through further devolution, accompanied by reforming the UK-wide constitutional arrangements through the abolition of the House of Lords. However, Labour explicitly outline the party's opposition to the devolution of full fiscal powers to the Scottish Parliament, frequently referred to as 'devo-max' or 'full fiscal autonomy':

We also concluded that scope existed for greater devolution of taxation powers than is currently planned, while stating our objection to full fiscal autonomy, which, in our view, is no more than a thinly disguised version of independence. (Scottish Labour Party, 2014a: 146)

Interestingly, this discursive strategy mimics the arguments of the pro-independence parties about the need for enhanced political sovereignty, resonating with ‘ideological’ modernist theories of nationalism such as those of Kedourie (1960), albeit with a curtailed range of powers in comparison to the SNP’s vision. This narrative trope therefore appears to fuse the concepts of political sovereignty with the idea of ‘small ‘n’ nationalism’ (Leith and Soule 2011) or ‘unionist nationalism’ (Ichijo 2012), thus legitimating Labour’s position on Scottish devolution through the reference to the ‘legitimate desire for more powers’.

#### *The Scottish Conservatives and Scotland’s Constitutional Status – ‘The Party of the Union?’*

Attention now turns to analysis of the discourse of the Scottish Conservatives (referred to as the Conservatives henceforth) vis-a-vis Scotland’s constitutional status, now the main opposition to the SNP in the Scottish Parliament following their resurgence at the 2016 Holyrood elections. Figure 4 summarises the Conservatives’ political discourse on this topic (Scottish Conservatives 2011, 2012, 2014a, 2014b):

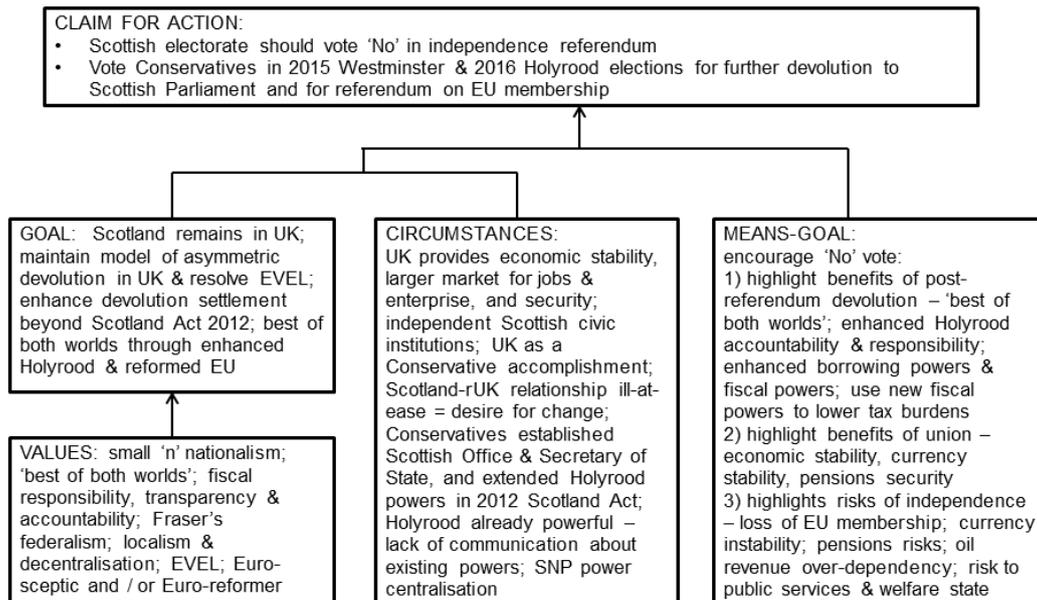


Figure 4 - Diagrammatic representation of Scottish Conservatives political discourse regarding Scotland's constitutional status

Given the strong degree of cooperation between the pro-union parties within the pro-union 'Better Together' campaign, it is perhaps unsurprising that analysis of the Conservatives' discourse on Scotland's constitutional status contained numerous similarities with that of Labour. However, analysis of the Conservatives' discourse also illustrates that the pro-union parties perpetuated nuanced positions on the constitutional debate. For example, on the topic of the union, the Conservatives clearly mirror the strategy of Labour in terms of consistently highlighting its benefits for Scotland (Sharp et al. 2014; Wheatley et al. 2014). However, in contrast to Labour's portrayal of a 'sharing union' underpinned by the 'pooling and sharing of resources' and values of social justice and solidarity, the Conservatives' description of the union places greater emphasis on economic and security considerations:

The two fundamental purposes of the Union are creating a **large, single and fully integrated economic market** for jobs and enterprise and **assuring the**

**common security** of everyone within the state. (Scottish Conservatives 2014b: 5; original emphasis)

The Conservatives' historic narration of the benefits of union for Scotland are also linked to the party's staunch pro-union constitutional stance:

The Conservative Party is and always has been the party of the Union... The Union was not and never has been an incorporating Union, requiring Scotland to assimilate as if she were nothing more than a northern region of England – or even an English colony. On the contrary, **the Union is founded on the principle that Scottish institutions maintain their distinctive identity.** (Scottish Conservatives 2014b: 3; original emphasis)

This narrative of the 'circumstances' of the union demonstrates the Conservatives' position on Scotland's constitutional status in numerous ways. Firstly, it highlights a discursive contest with Labour for the status of the 'party of the union'. Secondly, the Conservatives' explicit refutation of arguments which contend that the union was 'incorporating' and resulted in the colonisation of Scotland by England demonstrates a willingness to directly challenge some of the foundational positions of certain Scottish nationalists regarding the union (Dalle Mulle 2016; Mycock 2012; Sharp et al. 2014).

On a theoretical level, this suggests that the party's discourse not only explicitly challenges the positions of 'socioeconomic' modernist theories of nationalism such as Hechter's (1975)

‘internal colonialism’ thesis, but also implicitly contradicts other ‘modernist’ conceptualisations of the origins of the Scottish nation as a post-union development. Given that the Conservatives suggest that Scotland as a nation pre-dated the Act of Union, it would appear that the party’s discursive conceptualisation of the nation’s origins align more closely with those of ‘ethnosymbolist’ theories of nationalism (e.g. Armstrong 1982; Hutchinson 1994; Smith 1986, 2010), ironically echoing the position of the SNP.

Analysis of the Conservatives’ narratives of more recent political ‘circumstances’ in Scotland is also instructive in understanding the party’s stance. For example, despite the discursive battle with Labour for the status of the ‘party of the union’, the Conservatives’ discourse explicitly acknowledges that the Conservatives had historically been opponents of Scottish devolution. However, it is contended that the party has made some historic contributions to improving political representation for Scotland:

It was Lord Salisbury’s Conservative Government that established the Scottish Office in 1885, and it was a Conservative Prime Minister (Baldwin) who appointed the first Secretary of State for Scotland to the Cabinet in 1926... The Scottish Parliament was created under Tony Blair’s Labour Government but its powers and responsibilities have been considerably extended under David Cameron’s Conservative-led Government... (Scottish Conservatives 2014b: 3)

This emphasis on the Conservatives’ historic contribution, in conjunction with the additional devolution of powers proposed by the party in the Strathclyde Commission (Scottish Conservatives, 2014b), lends support to the arguments of Leith and Soule (2011) concerning

the Conservatives' recent conversion to support for Scottish devolution. Given the party's opposition to the introduction of the Scottish Parliament in the 1997 referendum, this stark contrast in its discourse demonstrates that there has been a move towards 'unionist nationalism' in the party's narratives on constitutional policy (Convery 2014; Ichijo 2012; Steven et al. 2012). Indeed, analysis of the details of the Strathclyde Commission's proposals demonstrated a greater willingness to devolve fiscal and budgetary powers to Holyrood than Labour's Devolution Commission proposals (Thomson, Mawdsley and Payne 2014), illustrating a swing in the party's adherence to 'small 'n' nationalism' (Leith and Soule 2011) which outstrips that of Labour.

Furthermore, the expression of support for additional devolution of powers to the Scottish Parliament cleared the ground for the Conservatives' post-referendum campaigns to introduce 'English Votes for English Laws' to areas of English-only policy controlled by the Westminster Parliament. This is also evident in the party's description of the nature of contemporary Scottish politics, with the Conservatives arguing that the relationship between Scotland and the rest of the UK is ill-at-ease (Scottish Conservatives, 2014b), and that there is a desire for change in Scotland (Scottish Conservatives, 2012). Again, the Conservatives' ideological position regarding Scotland's need for a degree of political sovereignty echoes the challenges faced by Labour regarding the accommodation of competing nationalisms within the British state through asymmetric devolution of powers within the Union.

Although analysis of the discourse of Labour and the Conservatives has demonstrated a degree of overlap, such as the espousal of 'small 'n' nationalism' (Leith and Soule 2011) by both parties, it is also true that each party's discourse demonstrates both nuanced and stark differences in their respective ideological 'values'. For example, the phrase 'best of both

worlds' is used by both parties to emphasise the benefits of the union and devolution as compared with independence for Scotland; however, compared with Labour's linking of this phrase to the 'pooling and sharing of resources', this idea is imbued with different political significance by the Conservatives:

Our plan gives us the best of both worlds: a Scottish voice that is loud and clear, a place at the top table and British heft in securing Scotland's vital interests in Europe. Crucially, it will give us the chance to fix our relationship with Europe and make sure it works. (Scottish Conservatives 2014a: 3)

This illustrates that the referendum campaign remained an opportunity for the articulation of contrasting political arguments by parties which were otherwise cooperating on constitutional matters, with the Conservatives' discourse articulating the party's Euro-sceptic and Euro-reformer 'values' in order to differentiate it from both the SNP and Labour (Anderson 2016; Convery 2014). However, these sceptical positions towards the European Union in turn highlight an ideological paradox within the Conservative's discourse, given their ideological objections to the arguments of Scottish political nationalists regarding the need for Scottish political sovereignty, whilst simultaneously making similar arguments regarding the need for enhanced British sovereignty following the loss of power to the European Union.

For the Conservatives, this use of referendum campaign discourse to promote the party's ideological 'values' was most clearly demonstrated within the publication of the Strathclyde Commission:

Throughout our report, we have based our recommendations on strong Conservative principles of **responsibility, transparency and accountability**, which we believe are required for a sustained relationship of all four parts of the UK. (Scottish Conservatives 2014b: 4; original emphasis)

These ‘Conservative principles’ of ‘responsibility’, ‘transparency’ and ‘accountability’ were repeatedly cited in support of the main recommendations of the Strathclyde Commission, such as the closure of the ‘fiscal gap’ in the Scottish Parliament by devolving additional fiscal powers to ‘create a more responsible Scottish politics’ (Scottish Conservatives 2014b: 8). This added responsibility is linked to the removal of the ‘grievance culture’ which blames Westminster for budgetary cuts (Leith and Soule 2011; Pittock 2008). The strategy of linking the Strathclyde Commission proposals to the Conservatives’ ideological ‘values’ allows the party’s referendum campaign discourse to serve a dual purpose, using the proposals to both counter the arguments of the pro-independence parties while also promoting the Conservatives’ policy positions.

In comparison to Labour who focused the majority of their discussion on highlighting the benefits of continuing union, analysis of the Conservatives’ discourse identifies a greater emphasis on outlining the benefits of further Scottish devolution in comparison to either the benefits of the union for Scotland or the risks of Scottish independence. As part of this strategy, particular emphasis was placed on the opportunity to use new fiscal and borrowing powers to both boost economic growth and to lower the tax burden for the Scottish electorate. This demonstrates that the party’s ‘imaginary’ for post-referendum Scotland is one in which further devolution would facilitate an opportunity to pursue neoliberal economic and taxation

policies in line with Conservative ideological values, with the repeated emphasis on ‘accountability, transparency and responsibility’ for the Scottish Parliament resonating with a vision of a smaller role for central government in Scottish society. The party’s framing of the union thus focused on the economic stability and security achieved for Scotland as part of UK; unsurprisingly, the risks of Scottish independence were juxtaposed with this narrative of an economically stable and secure UK:

The Scottish Conservatives will say no to independence so that we keep the UK pound, protect pensions and keep the strength and stability of the UK. (Scottish Conservatives, 2014b: 12)

Ironically, the Conservatives also highlighted the danger of losing membership of the EU as another risk factor for an independent Scotland, despite the party’s own Euro-sceptic or Euro-reformer ideological ‘values’ (Anderson 2016; Convery 2014). However, given the arguments of Ichijo (2004) about the comparatively favourable views on EU membership held by the Scottish electorate, it can again be argued that the mention of this issue by the Conservatives resembles a pragmatic political calculation to achieve the party’s ultimate ‘goal’ of a ‘No’ vote.

## **Conclusions**

In summary, it is clear that the contrasting constitutional and ideological positions of the three largest parties in Scottish politics demonstrate some stark and some more nuanced positions. Whilst the distinction between the pro-independence SNP and the pro-union

Labour and Conservative parties is unsurprising, the interrogation of their discourse in this period vis-à-vis theories and concepts derived from past analyses of nationalism has illustrated the contrasting representations of each party on the distant and recent history of Scotland as a nation. Indeed, the SNP's overarching emphasis on the pre-modern existence of an independent Scottish nation, and the concurrent resonance with ethnosymbolist rhetoric, acted as a central tenet of their attempts to normalise their 'imaginary' of a future independent Scottish state and assuage the potential fears of the Scottish electorate regarding this prospect. In contrast, the pro-union parties emphasised the modern history of the Scottish nation and its success as part of the British state in the post-Union period, aligning with modernist analyses of nationalism and thus downplaying or ignoring the pre-Union existence of an independent Scottish state; however, the positions of Labour and the Conservatives demonstrated contrasting and nuanced stances on the nature of the Union, and the benefits imbued in their respective 'best of both worlds' portrayals of the Union. This article has thus contributed to the study of contemporary Scottish nationalism through its explicit consideration of each party's manifesto discourse vis-a-vis the seminal theoretical approaches employed in the academic analysis of nationalism.

Building on the work of Leith and Soule (2011), Ichijo (2012) and Mycock (2012), the above findings make an additional contribution to studies of the discourse of contemporary Scottish nationalism by illustrating the inherent complexities and contradictions endemic within the language of political parties vis-à-vis their ideological stance on political sovereignty for Scotland. The use of Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) framework also illustrated that the contrasting abstract conceptualisations of nationalism prevalent within academic reflections on this issue are equally evident in empirical data from the domain of Scottish politics, demonstrating that the 'circumstantial premises', future 'imaginaries' and 'goal premises' of

each political party resonate with competing ideologies of nationalism and sovereignty. Given the aforementioned complexities faced by contemporary nationalist political movements with regards to their ideological construction of political sovereignty, undermined by the impact of economic globalisation and transnational geo-political organisations, this analysis has illustrated that nationalist parties in submerged nations such as Scotland and Catalonia face challenges in terms of squaring this ideological circle, echoing that arguments of past academic analyses (Dalle Mulle 2016; Ichijo 2009; Leith and Soule 2011; Mycock 2012).

Furthermore, the prospect of Scottish independence has remained a salient issue within the domain of Scottish and British politics, despite the eventual 'No' vote in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. Indeed, further succour for advocates of Scottish independence has emerged due to the outcome of the UK-wide referendum on EU membership which resulted in a victory for anti-EU 'Leave' campaign, despite strong electoral support in Scotland to 'Remain' in the EU as evident in the referendum results. The EU referendum result has therefore been portrayed as further evidence of the Scottish 'democratic deficit' which has been argued to impact political representation for the Scottish electorate within the UK (Dalle Mulle 2016; Ichijo 2009; Leith and Soule 2011; Mycock 2012), with the SNP citing the EU referendum outcome as a potential catalyst for a second Scottish independence referendum in the coming years. The novel methodological approach outlined above thus creates an opportunity for future research which explores the nuanced ideological shifts in each party's discourse on the matter of Scotland's constitutional status as politicians grapple with the ongoing constitutional turmoil in the Scottish, British and European context.

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