

# 11 Conclusion

---

What is Scotland's demand for statehood, and what lies behind it? This study has identified Scotland's desire for autonomy as democratic nationalism. In the process, conditions have emerged that have supported or repressed this purely political demand for self-government.

Niklas Luhmann used "self-mystification" and "additional semantics" to describe the differentiation of states in a very similar way:

"Perhaps the state is not a result of the self-actualisation of an already existing entity, but a result of its self-mystification, which is necessary so that one can establish continuity from communication to communication, from event to event. And this view would then not lead to controversies about the essence, but to the question of the historical and regional conditions for the plausibility of such self-mystification. The state always says: *L'état c'est moi*. The question is which additional semantics, which 'supplements' enable it to believe this." (Luhmann 1995b: 107 translated by the author)<sup>1</sup>

The most important conditions identified in the individual Chapters as supporting or inhibiting factors in the Scottish quest for autonomy are briefly listed here.

## 11.1 Summary

The study began with those motives for secession that can be inferred from communications. These motives of national self-determination are determined by the leading political distinction between democracy and autocracy and by the global spread

---

1 "[V]ielleicht ist der Staat kein Resultat der Selbstaktualisierung einer bereits bestehenden Einheit, sondern ein Resultat seiner Selbstmystifikation, die notwendig ist, damit man von Kommunikation zu Kommunikation, von Ereignis zu Ereignis Kontinuität herstellen kann. Und diese Auffassung würde dann nicht zu Kontroversen über das Wesen führen, sondern zur Frage nach den historischen und regionalen Bedingungen für die Plausibilität einer solchen Selbstmystifikation. Der Staat sagt immer: *L'état c'est moi*. Die Frage ist, welche Zusatzsemantiken, welche 'Supplemente' es ermöglichen, ihm das zu glauben."

of functional differentiation (Chapter 2). Scotland's nationalism is a progressive demand for self-government emanating from large sections of the population, which has grown out of the opportunities that small democracies have in the global society of the early 21st century through international, military defence alliances, free trade, tourism, and so on.

The subsequent Chapters have moved from the micro-level of communicative events to the level of expectations and semantics. Chapter 3 describes that the Scottish independence movement is primarily based on a social collective of the population living in Scotland formed through political inclusion. The reason for this can be found in British democracy. The democratic principle of electoral equality has translated the measurable loss of population in Scotland compared to England to this day into a loss of power. Against this background, Scotland is being promoted in the independence movement as an inclusive country of immigration.

The semantics analysed in Chapter 4, which is important in Scotland's politics in general and in the pursuit of statehood in particular, is egalitarianism. This is a national value commitment. In the secession movement, Scotland is differentiated from the politics of the United Kingdom by the desire for social democratic politics. Through social democracy, the Scottish desire for autonomy increases its visibility within the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the inclusion in state services, which is important for social democracies, helps to give political inclusion collective relevance outside of referendums and elections. Social democracy is an inclusionary, functional equivalent to the national-ethnic sense of belonging that emphasises exclusion.

Chapters 5 and 6 analyse national-cultural social structures and semantics of the Scottish striving for autonomy using the example of the anthem and the parliament. The difference between the political inclusion collective described in Chapter 3 becomes clear through national symbols. If secession is demanded so that the people living in Scotland can determine their political future, the national symbols emphasise togetherness. In the case studies on the anthem and the design of the parliament, it becomes clear that the journey is the goal. Therefore, the question of how the national collective arrived at this symbol is paramount. It is more important than the specific symbol. Crucial is the extent to which this procedure is compatible with the democratic self-image of the endeavour for autonomy. The political collective of inclusion restricts Scotland's national symbols.

Chapters 7 to 9 also enquire into the particular conditions under which the Scottish quest for autonomy arose. However, the focus here is on explanatory factors that trace Scotland's democratic nationalism back to regional differences in functional differentiation more clearly than in the other Chapters. Chapter 7, for example, concludes that Protestantism inhibits rather than promotes Scotland's democratic nationalism. The reason for this is the low regional differentiation between the Protestant religion and the state in the United Kingdom and the region of Scotland. The

increasing importance of Roman Catholicism in Scotland in recent decades could lead to a rupture, as the religious polarisation between these two denominations has shown. However, because both Roman Catholics and non-religious people overwhelmingly supported Scottish secession, albeit for different reasons, the Scottish independence movement was not only a 'social justice movement'. It was, more importantly, a multiculturalist movement.

An external factor in politics favouring the search for political autonomy within or outside the United Kingdom is the great importance of education in Scotland. Chapter 8 shows that in our day, inclusion in higher education is vital to note. It conveys a universalism that motivates an above-average number of students to identify as Scottish and embrace democratic nationalism.

As can be read in the Chapter on motives, another important factor explains the desire for secession. This centres on the relationship between the state and the economy (Chapter 9). With the question of the currency of an independent Scotland, the state and the economy became so closely linked that secession could be prevented. Conversely, Scotland's quest for autonomy has long sought to strengthen the population's willingness to secede by pluralising international trade.

Finally, in Chapter 10, the study examines the importance of Gaelic for the Scottish nation. It is argued that Scotland's identification as a Gaelic-Celtic nation strengthens national integration. It adds to Scottish democratic nationalism, the remote but largely Scottish-identifying population. It also justifies not only the protection of minorities but also multiculturalism and provides Scotland with a national self-definition based on sentimentality.

## 11.2 Comparing democratic and autocratic nationalism

What characterises the Scottish quest for statehood in the early 21st century? It is a form of democratic nationalism. This central thesis of this study will be discussed in the following by means of a comparison. Scottish nationalism will be contrasted with British nationalism—i.e. English nationalism. The latter was particularly relevant in England in the context of the referendum of 23. June 2016 on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union. England voted with a majority of 53.4 per cent to leave, while Scotland voted with a majority of 62 per cent to remain in the EU. At constituency level, the result was even clearer. In Scotland there was not a single constituency that voted majority for the so-called BREXIT, while in England there was hardly a single constituency that did not vote majority for the BREXIT. Age played an important role, as did university education, but even more important was whether a person described him or herself as English (Lord Ashcroft 2016). In the 30 constituencies where most people identified themselves as English, the majority voted for Brexit (BBC 2021; Burn-Murdoch 2016). For these reasons, it makes sense to

compare the Scottish independence referendum with the BREXIT referendum. The Scottish referendum represents Scottish nationalism and the BREXIT referendum represents English nationalism.

It is shown that the fundamental difference between Scottish and English nationalism is a question of primacy concerning the political or national collective. If the national-cultural collective is more important than the political collective, this is autocratic nationalism. If it is the other way round, i.e. if the collective of political inclusion is more important than the national-cultural collective, it is a case of democratic nationalism. In both cases, two collectives are relevant to nationalism.

In Scottish democratic nationalism, the quest for political autonomy is based on the primacy of the political collective, emerging by political inclusion in Scotland via elections, referenda, and welfare. In democratic nationalism, the national-cultural collective is distinguished from the political inclusion collective and democratically interpreted by the latter as a national inclusion collective. First and foremost, the movement for Scottish autonomy legitimises itself as a nation of presence (*Anwesenheitsnation*)—i.e. “the people who live here”.

This was already evident in the choice and design of national symbols. It is also evident in the interpretation of the Scottish nation as a pioneer of popular sovereignty. The esteem for individual self-determination bridges the gap between the political collective of inclusion and the collective of the national sense of belonging, which itself aspires to become an inclusive collective. In this way, history is told as an endeavour in which individual self-determination was always the main issue (see Kidd 1993: 35). The Declaration of Arbroath, addressed to the Pope in 1320, has only just been rediscovered in this context:

“For those who would like to see the Declaration of Arbroath as the fountainhead of Scottish political radicalism, the founding document of Scottish constitutionalism, animating Scottish political culture from that day to this, it is seriously problematic that for over 350 years after its composition virtually no one actually referred to it.” (Mason 2014: 268; on the shifts in meaning, see Crawford 2014).

It was only in democratic nationalism that this rediscovery of the Declaration was likely because it linked individual self-determination with Scotland’s national self-determination. Alex Salmond makes this link in a speech at the University of Virginia. The Arbroath Declaration is valued because it binds government to the individual self-determination of the governed:

“Arbroath was not only a ringing declaration of the fundamental rights and integrity of an independent Scotland, but arguably Europe’s first statement of a contractual relationship between government and governed. When the community of the realm articulated the view that they would back the monarch to defend

their rights, but would remove him if he failed to do so, they embarked on a road which led to America four and a half centuries later where the Arbroath Declaration was echoed with equal clarity and force. And it is that echo which we hear today in Scotland—in the twenty-first century, as we consider our nation's future. It is to America that we can look to see the power of independence and the importance of democratic principles. [...] And it is the words of Thomas Jefferson that will inspire us—today and in the years ahead: ‘We are a people capable of self-government, and worthy of it.’ (Salmond 2008b)

In Scotland's secession campaign, Salmond emphasises that it is not primarily about preserving a culture but about ensuring that the government is more strongly determined by the interests and problems that exist among the Scottish population:

“The Arbroath Declaration didn't simply help to ensure Scotland's survival as an independent nation. It said that the wider community of Scotland could choose a government to protect their interests. It started an embryonic concept of popular sovereignty which has had a lasting influence—in Scotland and in many other nations.” (Salmond 2014)

Scotland's history is linked to the first declaration of popular sovereignty. This history is to be taken up in the referendum. Secession would enable self-government for the “wider community of Scotland”, meaning the people who live in Scotland for whatever reason. Salmond explicitly distinguishes this view from endeavours that prioritise a particular ethnic or national community. Scotland's national culture is interpreted inclusively.

The notion that national culture values individual self-determination is inherent in Scotland's sense of national belonging (cf. Broadie 2007; on the Celtic ‘redneck’ culture of Scots-Irish immigrants in the USA cf. Webb 2004). As a cultural community, Scotland is seen as a nation that values individual self-determination. This cultural appreciation allows the instability associated with democracy to be endured (Luhmann 2009[1986]: 26) and makes the demand for progressive democratisation likely in the first place. Cultural factors stabilise Scotland's democratic nationalism. Only because this stabilisation works in the background—latency is a typical characteristic of cumulatively operating culture (see Christakis 2019: 364; Henrich 2016: 112, 220)—can Scottish nationalism successfully promote itself by claiming a nation of presence (Anwesenheitsnation).

A comparison of Scottish and English nationalism shows how important this consideration is. English nationalism currently lacks the interpretation of national culture aimed at individual self-determination. Norris and Inglehart speak here of a “cultural backlash”, by which they mean movements that are directed against the globalising structures of world society. They include English nationalism in this. By

this, they mean those who voted against the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union in the referendum on 23 June 2016 (79 % of people who identify as "English, not British" voted to leave, see Lord Ashcroft 2016: 8). This English nationalism is in favour of national-cultural restrictions on individual self-determination:

"As the old Left-Right divisions of social class identities have faded in Britain, an emerging cultural war deeply divides voters and parties around values of national sovereignty versus cooperation among E.U. member states, respect for traditional families and marriage versus support for gender equality and feminism, tolerance of diverse lifestyles and gender fluid identities, the importance of protecting manufacturing jobs versus environmental protection and climate change, and restrictions on immigration and closed borders versus openness towards refugees, migrants, and foreigners. These are the issues that divide many contemporary Western societies." (Norris/Inglehart 2018: 13f.)

Other studies confirm the result:

"[P]eople in favour of the death penalty and harsher prison sentences in general, and who are against equal opportunities for women and homosexuals are much more likely to support leave – to the tune of around 50 percentage points. This suggests that an underlying differences in the values that people hold are important to making sense of why some people were attracted to vote leave." (Goodwin/Heath 2016)

In contrast to democratic nationalism in Scotland, in English nationalism, the political inclusion collective is determined by the national-cultural sense of belonging. Politics is closely and extensively linked to national culture. Attitudes towards immigration were the most important factor in explaining the result of this EU referendum. Analysing the new dataset Areal interpolation and the UK's referendum on EU membership by Chris Hanretty (2017) on the referendum result, Eric Kaufman confirms that it was primarily about this close link between national inclusion/exclusion and culture:

"55 % of the variation in immigration attitudes across constituencies can be explained by Brexit vote share, a powerful association. The relationship is especially strong towards the [...] strongest Remain seats far more pro-immigration than elsewhere. [...] Education, ethnicity, share without a passport and age account for nearly 80 % of the variation in immigration opinion across constituencies. This means almost all of the differences in immigration attitudes over place have to do with these demographics. [...] [I]mmigration attitudes are the fulcrum around which the politics of western societies are realigning." (Kaufman 2019)

The desire to decide independently on immigration from Europe in the UK in future is at the centre of many so-called Brexiteers' concerns. The reason for this desire, according to Kaufman and many others, is not primarily to be found in the economy but in the hope of being able to return to an ethnically determined and hierarchical order through the nation:

"This is because those whose psychological make-up inclines them to see difference as disorder and change as loss are voting for parties that promise to slow immigration. This isn't generally about competition for jobs or services, which is a safer narrative to voice, but instead mainly about majority-ethnic and what I term 'ethno-traditional' national identities. Conservative voters feel that these are being unsettled by the rapid ethnic shifts sweeping across western countries." (Kaufman 2019; cf. on the USA Klein 2020: 130)

The nationalist UKIP favours a points system for immigration based on national needs (the only difference to the SNP says Revest 2016). Decisions on sentencing (death penalty), economic policy (on the automotive industry O'Toole 2018: 177), lifestyles, sexual orientations etc. are related to the guiding difference between rulers/governed. Typical words are vassal state, surrender, colony, diktat, shackle vs. free, democracy, elected governments vs. appointed technocrats, take back control (the word list comes from Buckledee 2018: 59-74). These words link political power to the collectivist culture of the United Kingdom.

Scotland's autonomy movement is to be distinguished as a democratic nationalism. Democratic nationalism also requires a sense of togetherness. However, this link between the political collective of inclusion and the national collective differs from English nationalism. Scotland's cultural-national collective is based on the idea that some people identify as Scottish wherever they live. Moreover, the national value commitment of egalitarianism is crucial. Scotland's political culture does not to tolerate inequalities to the same extent as the Anglo-American model. It is also important that collectively binding decisions tend to be taken by consensus to encourage participation by the whole population. In addition to this value orientation and political tradition of decision-making, Scotland's relationship with England is often associated with claims of Scottish nationalism. Although the cultural interpretation of this aspect with the Jacobites is much more controversial than the other factors in Scotland's national-cultural identification.

In contrast, English nationalism is based on the cohesion of the national-cultural collective. The national inclusion and exclusion, ranging from citizenship to xenophobia, observed by Kaufman and many others, dominates English nationalism and allows it to be understood as an autocratic nationalism: "Brexit must mean control of the number of people who come to Britain from Europe. And that is what we will deliver" promised the Prime Minister on 17 January 2017 (May 2017).

In democratic nationalism, the autonomy of the desired Scottish state is primarily justified by the political inclusion of the population living in Scotland. Added to this is the cultural symbolism of the nation, interpreted as a spontaneous formation. Only those who live in Scotland should be able to have a say in Scotland's politics. As a national collective, finding national symbols is valued more than the actual symbol itself. Apart from valuing individual self-determination, Scotland's cultural identification is based on the fact that and through what someone identifies with Scotland. Scotland's nationalism is not against but in favour of individual self-determination.