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# Scotland's Nordic unionists:

## From union to union?

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MSc by Research (Human and Health) FT

University of Huddersfield

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## Abstract

*Scotland's Future*, The Scottish Government's guide to independence proposed cooperation with the Nordic Council amongst multiple external relations objectives, a continuation of references by independence supporting elites to the region that stretch decades. Closer cooperation with Norden as pronounced in the paper implies that the Nordic Council serves at least two functions, firstly, a basis for fostering a rejuvenated Council of the British Isles based on the Nordic Council framework (Qvotrup, 2009; Bogdanor, 2009), and secondly, formal political and societal union with the Nordic region (Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone 2013). Both functions permeate from the rejection of Scotland's current union with rUK, and SNP rhetoric of 'independence within Europe' suggesting that senior politicians have no qualms in leaving one union for another.

Scholarly references tend to narrow on discourse linking independence to the creation of a Nordic welfare model with little attention to formal regional unification through the Nordic Council. This thesis therefore studies the independence movement's use of Norden and explores both the context and purpose of Scottish-Nordic articulations. It finds that most political groups sympathetic to independence desire cooperation with Norden but not to the detriment of future relations with rUK in the event of independence. The use of Norden is not solely a desire to replicate Nordic models of welfare as many scholars argue, but rather, Norden invokes a political and societal partner that emphasises the movement's progressive ambitions. The pursuit of Norden as a union ultimately stems from the collapse of the UK's welfare union and the damaging effects of a unitary and confined constitutional system, meaning that the political elite favour a societal and political approach to union like that of Norden and for some elites, an actual political and societal union with the region.

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Key:

EU: European Union

NORDEFECO: Nordic Defence Cooperation

rUK: Remainder of the United Kingdom

SGP: Scottish Green Party

SNP: Scottish National Party

UK: United Kingdom

## 1. Introduction

Nicola Sturgeon's premiership as First Minister for the Scottish Government began with the introduction of a gender equal cabinet and aspirations of achieving Nordic levels of equality (Torrance, 2014). These aspirations reflected a continuity in using the Nordic region as a model in Scottish state building. Displays of affection and scepticism towards references to Norden are visible in many areas of Scottish political sphere, but most notably, comparisons and favourable relations stem from Scotland's various independence campaigns (Carr, 2015). Groups such as Common Weal and Nordic Horizons were established to promote a stronger partnership with the region through a Scottish variant of the esteemed Nordic model and the development of transnational learning. These links and interests culminated in the Nordic region forming part of a wide reaching external relations remit for the Scottish Government in the event of independence. It is in this context that the research developed.

Compared to the use of near neighbours Ireland, the Baltic countries and other successful small independent nation-states, Norden has been a consistent feature of Scotland's autonomy debate (Newby, 2009; Keating and Harvey, 2014). Literature mostly references SNP's desire for Scotland's ability to replicate a Nordic model rather than Nordic cooperation in the context of Scottish independence (Newby, 2009; Hilson, 2010; Harvey, 2015). Union options post-independence have had very little academic discussion and few studies undertake elite interviews in assessing motive for framing Nordic outlook. This comes despite prominent understanding that elites are integral in framing national identity. An alignment with social democracy reflects Scottish aspirations in contrast to austerity and interventionist policies generated at Westminster. It has propelled several activists to the conclusion that the union is no longer a positive force. Much of this is rooted in Scotland's relationship to the post-war consensus and the continual legacy of the British Empire on UK unionism. Some theorists, however, argue that the union is not necessarily dead but would take a radical restructure and redefined purpose of the union.

Previous studies have often alluded to problems in implementing Nordic style consensus or welfare models, and in doing so they often undervalue the importance of discursive frameworks in building the Scottish state. The independence movement's articulation of Norden, rather, is as a process of unification, expanding the contours of external shelter options. *Scotland's Future*, a guide to independence particularly suggested that an independent Scotland should seek cooperation with the Nordic region (Norden) as part of an expansive external relations remit. Norden and the nation-states that form the



region have been utilised regularly by the Scottish independence movement as an aspiration for successful small independent statehood. Described by some as ‘envious glances’ to Scotland’s northern neighbours, groups within the independence movement have drawn inspiration on an eclectic mix of issues such as democracy, gender equality, social mobility and model of union (Harvey, 2015).

The SNP and Scottish Green Party (SGP) in particular have a history of drawing upon the region. Ostensibly providing a scope for altering the framework of the Scottish state, Nordic references are a process of unification, laying foundations that both maximise relations with the region and provides an additional identity benefit through the region’s positive standing in World politics. Rather than merely models of welfare and consensus democracy, Scottish use of Norden also exhibits wider defence and cooperation considerations. Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone (2013) argue that whilst Scotland is likely to retain security, economic and societal union with rUK, in contrast the Nordic council would act as political shelter. This suggests that the independence movement is seeking a new political union in particular and that distinctions with rUK are politically agitated. Are Scotland’s independence movement Nordic unionists or yearning for a different relationship with rUK? Unionism, therefore, is the preliminary starting point for this thesis.

By comparing the current UK union with Nordic unionism, this thesis identifies certain factors required for unification, and secondly identifies the views of both unions amongst high profile actors. Assessing Scottish independence elite’s use of Norden through a union perspective offers the most criticality of Nordic references and indicates the drivers motivating distinctions with rUK. Invoking a region famed for its progressive politics, elites guide citizens to re-imagine its own relationship to the region. An examination of elite discourse in shaping Scottish Nordic references means we can articulate the extent to which elites argue for a Nordic Scotland, the extent it is a tool of differentiation, and through testing this against a framework of Nordic identity, and of unionism, we can see whether these may lead to a practical output.

There have also been notable changes in the Nordic regions’ purpose and identity given the importance of the European Union, yet the global economic climate and the Ukraine crisis means that Norden remain a pertinent model of positive social policy, peace and disarmament. The attempt by Estonia to identify with Norden and the increasing importance of Arctic in altering Norden’s geography instructs flexibility. Scotland being a member of a wider Nordic area is imaginable.

Despite increasing critical examination and contestation over its meaning, if Scotland were to become Nordic, then its place in the region would depend on aligning Scottish interests with the regions broader tenets, in its cooperative bodies, social welfare model and strategic accounts. Finland and Estonia have been subject to similar academic examination through the scope Nordic identity. They display both successful and undetermined routes to union with Norden, but clearly indicate that that elite orientation towards Nordic political cooperation through security and social democratic dimensions lead to political unification. The extent to which political groups in Scotland recognise broader tenets of Nordic cooperation along with a desire to cooperate in future determines the likeliness of Scotland joining Norden.

This thesis tackles many of these gaps, primarily addressing the wider movement's articulation of Nordic identity and analysing these through the frame of unification. Firstly, through a literature on Scottish-Nordic understandings, then through the prism of union, this thesis understands the formal and informal ties that bind these unions together. The review understands that utilising Norden is an elite concept, and that studies on Scotland tend to focus on possibilities to adopt a Nordic model of democracy or social investment rather than assessing elite's views on membership of the Nordic Council or defence cooperation. It also argues that the union with rUK is in decline, or at worst nearing its end, a result of constitutional debates and the decline of UK's welfare union. The longevity of Nordic cooperation also faces stern academic attention as their minimal cooperative structures allow countries to adopt stances that are more flexible. External understandings of Norden continue to focus predominantly on its social democratic model.

The second part of this research focuses on the methodological structure. This qualitative study is composed of semi-structured interviews and content data from significant actors from six independence-supporting groups. Angus MacDonald MSP, SNP (Scottish Nationalist Party), Patrick Harvey MSP, SGP (Scottish Green Party), Cat Boyd, RIC (Radical Independence Campaign), Rory Scothorne, National Collective, Lesley Riddoch, Nordic Horizons, and Robin McAlpine, Common Weal. All these campaigns have deliberated on the Nordic region in some form of debate associated with the identity and understanding of modern Scotland. A thematic qualitative review using content analysis illuminates the context of Norden in the debate, and the elements of cooperation used to construct Scotland's independence.

This thesis then answers a series of research questions on Scotland's relationship with Norden and UK unions; how do Independence supporting elite's articulate UK identities and the current union with rUK? Is the use of Norden a rejection of the UK's unionisms, or a desire to be Nordic? Subsequently, three themes emerge from this study. Firstly, Scottish use of Norden is linked to a 1950's understanding of UK consensus and welfare. The perceived destruction of the UK's welfare union that is particularly detrimental to the future with rUK and thus many images of Scottish nationhood are examples of saving institutions built during this period. It reflects very much Esping-Anderson's (1990) and Marr's (1992) view that there has been no significant progress in the social democracy in the UK since the 1980's, that this has led to a continuing theme of conservative unionism versus a northern looking Scottish nationalism.

The broad use of Norden by elites sympathetic to independence suggests that a both a political and societal union is to some extent desired. Softer elements of the Nordic brand, such as education, health policies and features of Arctic involvement indicate that the political union could produce a softer cultural dynamic. The role of groups such as Nordic Horizons have been significant in developing a broader Nordic engagement that could qualify and generate considerable transnational cooperation with the region.

It thus supports the general premise of this study, that Scotland desires a different type of union, a general collaborative and confederal approach to issues such as inequality that many that advocate independence find so detrimental to the success of the United Kingdom. This is further supported by a careful elite repositioning of the Scottish state in line with the Nordic model that does not come at the expense of desire to remain in an altered union with rUK. Their pronouncement of UK political divergence suggests that the British Irish Council is a desired aim, a council that resembles the Nordic Council's structures. Overall, whilst Norden is invoked rhetorically to distinguish Scotland with Westminster, elite use of Norden is not a call for exchanging unions, but rather a rejection of the political union that ties them with rUK. Norden would act as an overlapping cultural and political identity in very much the same way that being associated culturally with rUK would.

## 2. Literature Review

The use of Norden in the Scottish Government's White Paper on Independence (2013) consolidates ideas that some advocates of independence believe that independence would help Scotland achieve Nordic levels of equality and success. Closer cooperation with Norden as pronounced in the paper implies that the Nordic Council serves at least two functions, firstly, a basis for fostering a rejuvenated Council of the British Isles based on the Nordic Council framework (Qvotrup, 2009; Bogdanor, 2009), and secondly, formal political and societal union with the Nordic region (Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone 2013). Both suggestions appear to permeate from the rejection of Scotland's current union with rUK, and SNP rhetoric of 'independence within Europe' suggesting that senior politicians have no qualms in leaving one union for another (Hepburn and McLoughlin, 2006; Gallagher, 2010). With Norden acting, rhetorically at least, as an aspirational model for independent statehood, evaluating elite positions on UK and Norden unions display how independence supporting elites wish to conduct unification (Newby, 2009; Hilson, 2010; Harvey, 2015).

This review therefore proceeds by identifying literature on unions and unification, particularly articulating how contemporary approaches to national identity have shifted due to dispersed sovereignty. In this context, this thesis then critically evaluates literature on both UK and Norden union frameworks. It suggests that the UK remains fairly centralised and described as a traditional union state, whereas Norden is more collaborative and transnational, with region building a priority. Finally, this review assesses studies on Scotland's contemporary connections to Norden, from a desire to establish a Nordic model of social democracy to joining the Nordic Council, as well as the impact this has on depictions of rUK. Subsequently this thesis adopts a union framework to analysing Scottish-Nordic-UK relations due to a concerted effort by academics to analyse Scotland's ability to create a Nordic welfare model rather than unification, and secondly, the lack of wider examination of the independence movement. This thesis as a result understands that there is a route to Scottish membership of Norden, and that unlike union with rUK, requires significant political and societal orientation.

## 2.1 Unionism and Unification

This chapter discusses different approaches to unionism and unification in a multinational context. As has been mentioned, Scotland's independence movement has engaged in the idea of using the European Union to propel Scotland's independence case with Norden also playing a similar but more aspirational role (Gallagher, 2010; Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone 2013). The use of unionism within a Scottish independence debate leads this chapter to discuss theoretical studies on unions and unification, in particular focussing on two distinct approaches, post-sovereign and sovereign unions. Ultimately, this chapter argues that post-sovereignty is becoming an increasingly utile concept, especially utilised by secessionist movements to maximise their national autonomy and goes hand in hand with changes to national identity understanding. Firstly, this chapter looks at shifts in national identity, which fuel certain approaches to unification. Secondly, this chapter discusses different types of union before finally looking at how modern nationalism translates increasingly to the dispersion of sovereignty.

Unification and unionism are intrinsically bound to the politics of national identity. Often presented through banal symbols of statehood (Billig, 1999), unions are by extension a form of imagined community, articulated largely by elites and citizens who believe share culture, geography, politics and history. Benedict Anderson's (1983) argued that elites converse on identity frameworks establishing various imagined communities stemming from historical and cultural norms. Held (1999) further argues that nation's identity is commonly rooted in ethnic identity and common history that is bound to a specific territorial space, further rooting national identity to perceived histories. Chatterjee (1996), however, challenges this position, arguing that imagined communities are modular and developed from colonial histories rather than being original. This questions the extent that new states can assert a fresh identity, and thus indicating that unification options are limited to historical connections.

Keating (2002) extends this discussion that modular national identity is a product of the past and no longer relevant to the multi-national structures of unionism. Colley (1992) too argues that identities are unlike hats, in that a person can hold many at the same time. Despite Keating (2002) and Colley's (1992) view that national identity is more fluid, Balakrishnan (1996) argues that modern global society has not diminished the electorate's desires for clear and stable identities. Although unification is a process in which integration is increased and there is an element of choice, it is also the result of regional and historical precedents according to Clavin (2005) and Etzioni (1964). These histories and identities are integral in framing union options available for nation-states. Therefore, whilst modular national identities

appear more fluid with the emergence of multi-national structures, these options, like imagined communities are rooted in historical relationships and electoral desire for clear identities.

Unions and unification are contested terms (Gallie, 1962), and generally united definitions are difficult to attain due to literature's reliance on comparative studies. There are, however, many similarities with contemporary discussions emanating around the idea of the sovereign state or the increasingly prominent post-sovereign theory (Rokkan and Urwin, 1982; Kidd, 2008; Tierney, 2007; 2009; Etzioni, 2001).

More formalised sovereign unions, in the shape of federal and multi-national unions have centralised tendencies (Rokkan and Urwin, 1982; Loughlin, 2007; Tierney, 2009). Acts of union and historical precedents generally inform these agreements (Tierney, 2009). Whereas transnational or confederal unions are identified as particularly intergovernmental, and post-sovereign. They are tied by very loose cooperative remits, which are established on basis of political will (Etzioni, 1964; Sundelius and Wiklund, 1979).

Transnational unions, defined by O'Hara (2008) as an arena of policy transfers and globalisation of public policy has subsequently served to alter the locality of national identity (Vertovec, 1999; Clavin, 2005). Norden appears within this model having promoted an agenda of exporting lessons on labour market policies and welfare (Browning, 2006; Mouritzen, 1995; O'Hara, 2008). Hans Andersson's (2010) adds that transnational unions are porous, interactive and revisable, the perfect environment for innovations and agreements.

To some extent, Norden and historically ASEAN can be characterised by relaxed intergovernmental unionism as they display a strong emphasis on transnational collaboration (Clavin, 2005; Sutherland, 2005). Sutherland (2005; 2007) argues that although ASEAN no longer fits this definitional structure having increased its platform to replicate the EU, its initial bounds had very little enforcing objectives and institutions limited to research and cultural projects. They therefore reinforce regional identity, but not at the expense of national identity. Although invoking shared cultural heritage lacks substance and is often banal, Sutherland argues (2005) that shared heritage is important as symbolic gestures that promotes cognitive regionalism.

Although the UK's union framework exhibits predominantly sovereign features, Andersson (2010) argues that the British Commonwealth operates in a transnational way. Contrary to the idea that post-sovereignty relegates historical accounts, Andersson (2010) argues that in the examples of Norden, Benelux and the British Commonwealth, these attachments serve their collective identity. These unions

can operate as an additional, lucrative arrangement and their collective identities are a measure of successful transnational partnership. These identities are for demarcation, as Andersson (2010) articulates the example of the EU construction of identity as anti-death penalty, putting it in distinct difference with USA.

The transnationalism of identity has fundamentally shifted debates on the traditional union states that Rokkan and Urwin (1982) understood. Informal and transnational memberships are a large feature of the European Union and more regionally, and as with most federalised models show a sharp departure from the traditional centralised model of the state (Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Bollens, 2008). Contrary to sovereignty dispersed through the unitary nation-state, it has shifted to include as continental and regional boundaries resulting in multi-layered and porous identities (Bollens, 2008; Keating, 2002). Hooghe, Marks (2001) and Bollens (2008) argue that the European Union has in particular obscured nation and sub-state sovereignty and constitutional dynamic. Multi-level governance has become the norm and subsidiarity the measure of competence, expressing a new approach to nationalism and regionalism.

Keating (2012) argues that although statehood remains the predominant end game for secessionist movements, contemporary statehood lacks the traditional conditions of sovereignty. Bailes, Þórhallsson, Johnstone (2013), Bollens (2010), and Keating (2002; 2012) argue that sovereignty is obscured by overarching transnational and supranational agreements, the secessionist parties in particular have thrived in this environment so it is therefore believed that they have few qualms in operating under multi-variant unionisms. Tierney (2005) and Keating (2002) add that secessionist movements have been successful in utilising global asymmetric political orders to reference membership of international organisations. Tierney (2005) suggests that movements like those advocating Scottish independence are better prepared than a state when it comes to changing global realities, as they are less likely to retain current institutions, and keen to seek opportunities to engage diplomatically outside of their territorial boundaries.

Keating (2002) similarly argues that secessionist parties have moved beyond historical and territorial definitions, through de-ethnicisation, and embracing civic nationalism. This approach has been a common feature in movements like the SiU of Catalonia and SNP identifying themselves as more progressive in orientation (Pallares et al, 1997, p.145; Mycock, 2012). The perceived intergovernmentalism, in the EU's case that has intensified secessionist movements using the Union to enhance state sovereignty (Sunderland, 2005). Hayton and Mycock (2012) add that, unlike secessionist parties, many UK political

parties fail to utilise transnational coalitions available within the EU governance frameworks, and instead succumb to national priorities.

The increased role of post-sovereignty in unification literature means that a model of union that overlaps this divide is crucial. Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone's (2013) study offers a sturdier and overlapping framework that singles out different shelters, or unions. They divide this into four, the function of political, economic, security and societal shelter for small states. An economic union is formed of currency union, beneficial loans, or favourable market access. Political shelter is characterised by direct and visible diplomatic and operational support, and applies to support in international organisations (Thorhallsson 2011). Societal shelter is the establishment of good external cultural and social communication (Rokkan and Urwin, 1983; Thorhallsson 2012b; Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone, 2013). This model is used to develop a typology of both UK and Nordic union's in the following chapter, which will subsequently support further analysis later in the thesis.

Scotland's possible strategies for external relations hinge on these multi-layered frameworks of rUK, NATO, EU, and Norden (Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone, 2013). All these unions have different qualities, offering a mixture of security, economic, societal and political refuge. Similarly, just as Etzioni (2001, p.12) defines a union as a group of countries that continuously act in unison on a number of issues important to its interests such as homogeneity, common enemies and shared properties, Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone's (2013) framework is significant in aligning post-sovereign understanding of identity that applies particularly to secessionist movements. The myriad of different union options are as Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone (2013) suggest a product of European states opting for multiple alliance formations, making it therefore possible for Scotland to seek or develop a range of partnerships without contradicting its sovereign identity (Keating, 2002).

Overall, this chapter argues that Scotland's choice in the event of independence is not a choice between two unions, but rather unification with Norden may be part of a wider remit that includes NATO and the EU. The emergence of transnationalism and post-sovereignty literature and the flexibility of independence movements mean that to understand the polarities of Norden and UK through Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone's (2013) framework can help to encompass both sovereign and post-sovereign unification. Understanding how UK and Norden operate therefore provides a framework to locate the Scottish independence movement's external relations objective.



## 2.2 The United Kingdom

There is considerable contestation over the description of the UK's union framework, not only its description, but also its foundations (Kidd, 2009; Cairney, 2011). This next chapter critically assesses definitions and origins of its cooperation, arguing that despite successive devolution settlements, the UK retains an overtly centrist unitary system that is considerably distinct from a federal union (Tierney, 2009). This chapter then concludes that although UK unionisms are in turmoil, it still comprises of distinguishable union dynamics, mostly centralised and formed around societal institutions.

### 2.2.1 Definitions

Scholarly definitions of the United Kingdom are primarily formed of three competing systems, federal, pluri-national, and unitary unions (Rokkan and Urwin, 1982; Loughlin, 2001; Cairney, 2011; Tierney, 2007; 2009; Keating, 2002; Kidd, 2009). Labelled as the traditional 'Union State' by Loughlin (2011), a condition of the various acts and contexts by which it formed, the territorial accommodation of pluri-nationalism that underpinned this set-up appears to have disintegrated as a result of successive devolution deals (Rokkan and Urwin, 1982; Tierney, 2009). Although Rokkan and Urwin (1982) described the UK as the last old state, their description of the UK as mechanical federalism shows how they understood contemporary changes in unification and the complex nature of Scotland's position in the union. Farley (2000) confers somewhat with Rokkan and Urwin's (1982) position, arguing that although Scotland has more power than the German lander, it does not really constitute a federal state, but this is likely to be where it ends up (Wright, 2000).

Devolution has led to a restructuring of Scotland's union with rUK, yet Tierney (2009) suggests that the ad hoc approach by the UK government to territorial nationalism has only exacerbated secessionism. Farley (2000), however, argues that devolution was Westminster produced, but demanded and designed by Scotland, contrary to the views of Tierney (2007) and McCormack (2000), who believe that devolution was from 'on high'. Tierney arguing that the power held by Westminster means that compromise was at the minimum cost to central government (Tierney, 2007). Cairney (2011) also suggests that whilst the UK is almost federal because it maintains Scottish representative at the UK level through Scottish secretary of state, it lacks a supreme constitution to safeguard against unilateral change from central government. Despite significant steps towards federalism, the un-codified constitution has an adverse effect on equal structural reform.

The concept of pluri-national union also refers to the UK's structure is defined by Keating (2002) as a union of multiple political communities rather than single and unitary demos. It presupposes that there is an equal partnership of nations, however national identities do not always have equal political weight, in the UK there is recognition for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as nations largely in a similar fashion with Quebec (Tierney, 2009; Keating, 2002; Loughlin, 2011). Whilst the arrangement exhibits banal respect for the devolved settlements by accommodating different national minorities on territorial lines, it does not ensure any equality is in practice assured, with power exhibiting a unitary dynamic. Tierney (2007) in particular believes the UK is therefore a unitary state, emphasising that the Scotland Act 1998 was power handed down by Westminster but restricted by both UK and EU in fiscal policy. Devolution is suggestively top-down and asymmetric which further questions the definition of pluri-national UK (Tierney, 2007; 2009; Kidd, 2009). The union is thus one-sided and unstable, exhibiting assimilationist integration tendencies (Tierney, 2007).

### 2.2.2 Societal union

Whilst Scotland exhibits a tense relationship with Westminster, a result of a perceived unitary system, unionism has bounded Scots to two crucial histories, a transatlantic empire and a welfare state (Kidd, 2008; McEwan, 2002; Devine, 2012).

The origins of the union are particularly contentious. Kidd (2008) argues that the relationship with England, largely benign since its formation in 1707 is a now a core contention. Historical perceptions generally assert the union being in Scottish interest (Kidd, 2008). Competing historical perspectives of the union and its origins framing contemporary constitutional debates. Scotland's relationship with England, Empire and the welfare state have come to symbolise this complex relationship. For Colley (1992, 2014), Rokkan, and Urwin (1982), many of the elements behind the UK's success in territorial structures were disintegrating by the 1980's. A common set of values, unbroken historical thread of continuity, nationwide two party system have all slowly disintegrated as significant differences in geography, distribution of class, and political events have questioned the homogeneity of the union (Rokkan and Urwin 1982)

Colley (1992), McGarry (2006) and Devine (2005; 2012) identify loss of Empire as a pivotal moment of British history when it comes to disintegration of the union. Devine particularly argues that Scotland often asserted their equal partnership through their connection to the empire, with Glasgow referred to as the "second city of the Empire" (Devine, 2012). The British Empire, however, has again become associated

with conflated English and British identities (Devine, 2012). Ward (2005, p.48) argues that this distinction between Scotland and English positions on Empire had early origins, proponents of devolution such as Tom Johnstone called for an empire for socialist ends in 1922, an ambition to reconcile Scottish working class with the interests of people in the colonies. Accordingly, Ward (2005) also suggests that the UK's success in the Second World War eliminated such tensions.

On the issues of common British and UK identity, McEwan (2002) argues one consequence of devolution is that institutional recognition for the Scottish state has intensified its sense of nationhood and produced political structures to formalise independence. Tierney (2007) also argues that the Scotland Act increased the distinction between host state and sub-state national identity. The act shows strong integrative tendencies rather than accommodating measures, thus intensifying perceptions of Scotland as unequal partner (Tierney 2007; Loughlin, 2011). Prime Ministers Gordon Brown and David Cameron, have often uncritically talked of the UK's identity, at least prior to the referendum, where deliberation on Britishness was reactionary to debates on multiculturalism rather than the state of the Union, appealing more to English rather than Scottish histories (McGlynn and Mycock, 2010; Mycock 2012). McGlynn and Mycock (2010) believe that the challenge to define a specific UK culture ironically comes at a time when devolution has allowed parties to challenge a civic Britishness. Britishness is thus peripheral, and reaching out to this theme has drawn attention to the crisis in British Unionism (McCrone, 2013).

The term British does not mean the same in all parts of the UK. The civic canopy that British identify plays in England is replicated by Scottishness in Scotland (Rose and Hepburn, 2015). Scottish born Muslims relate less to British identity, perhaps a consequence to Westminster's actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unionism is ultimately stronger amongst respondents identifying as British. British unionism can also mean very different things, as Rose and Hepburn (2015) suggest that for example in Northern Ireland it is fiercely territorial, consequently leading to a complex identity for unionism in Scotland and Wales. In Scotland, to a less extent than Northern Ireland, unionism comes with deep religious connotations, whereas in England 'union' use degraded once Irish question was settled (Jackson, 2012).

Devine (2012) argues that the most integral tie to the union is welfare. The demise of the British Empire's importance in Scotland led to the reinvigoration of the union as the welfare union provided material benefit to the mass of Scots (2012). Post-war welfare had a nation building and reinforcing of British identity amongst Scots also indicated by Ward (Devine, 2012). This defence has in turn strengthened Scottish support for devolution and further powers, which has led to state building and territorial distinction (McEwan, 2002). Yet contemporary deliberation over Empire and a distinct Scottish approach

to the Iraq war and multiculturalism debates destroys Ward's (2005, p.186) articulation that World Wars played significant part in shaping a perception of United Kingdom's benevolent World role. Crucially, Colley (2014) argues that many features of UK history come from its empire and affinity with the sea. Described as both a bridge and a border, the island nation has fostered distinct perceptions of the empires role. Colley argues that to some extent this fostered Scottish unionism at the start, with King James invoking these images as defence for the collaboration of kingdoms, this confers with Kidd (2010) and Devine (2012) on the historical importance of empire to Scottish unionist identity.

Rose and Hepburn (2014) maintain that UK values are shared. The inconsistencies in autonomy narratives are clear in Scottish rejection of British Empire (Mycock, 2012), and its positivity towards state institutions such as monarchy, Royal Mail, NHS, BBC (Norman, 2012). Westminster, rather than England is the issue, as Scottish culture is inherently British. Although the SNP favours commonwealth membership and shared monarchy, it is seen in the context of social relations with the UK, rather than as part of the wider commonwealth. Mycock (2012) believes strong associations to Empire limits their ability to be an 'honest broker' in world affairs. Mycock (2012) adds that the anti-imperialist themes focus on its own colonisation by England rather than being a product of its own exploitative gains of empire. Tierney (2009) argues that British and English identities have thus become synonymous, incensed by constitutional ad hoc approach.

McEwan (2002) argues though that Thatcherism saw a decline in some shared values and a feeling that Scots were more collectivist in nature, the end of full employment philosophy and support for crucial industries alienated Scotland from Conservative party, (Devine, 2012; Kidd, 2008). Devine (2012) argues that opposition to the Conservative party was more than dissatisfaction with government, but rather, rooted in Scots loyalty to the idea of state and community. Devolution has therefore given Scots view that Holyrood is most reflective of Scottish policy priorities and legislative responsibility has put them in a position to draw symbolically on the welfare state (McEwan, 2002).

Aspects of differentiation were particularly problematic during the referendum where unionism referred to a broad range of political leanings and federal objectives. The Liberal Democrats can also be challenged as a party advocating federalism as their structures according to Laffin and Shaw (2007) prioritise an increasingly Anglicised Westminster parliament (Holmes, 2007; Hayton and Mycock; Evans 2014). The role of Labour and liberal democrat parties have to their subsequent detriment by aligning themselves with the unionist cause overlooks distinctions in the party on federalist objectives (Jackson, 2012; Hayton and Mycock, 2012). In addition, Keating (2015b) argues that Labour's involvement in the unionist camp also

had consequences to the welfare union and that their losses in Scotland mean there is no 'British' social democratic party underpinning social solidarity across the isles.

### 2.2.3 Political union

The democratic element underpinning the UK is often described as majoritarian. Jonsson (2014) and Cairney (2011) argue that its system is characterised by strong executives and a two party system based on Lijphart's terminology, further perceived as an adversarial Westminster model of democracy (2014). Arter (2005) and Harvey (2015), however, is most critical, stating that these models idealised and that debates do not always reflect the reality (Arter, 2004). After retaining an active civil society with its own institutions such as church and education after the unification with England in 1707, it meant that Scotland already had a distinguished political culture since unification, according to Marr (1992) and Soule et al (2012). Scottish images of union are therefore considered in the context that Scotland has a somewhat defined sense of nationhood.

This tension is picked up by Colley (2014) and Bogdanor (1999), arguing that a considerable amount of constitutional changes would be required to avoid the eventual break-up of the union. Continually asymmetric devolved powers between the home nations indicate that whilst Westminster has implemented considerable change, resentment is likely to persist (Colley, 2014). Bogdanor (1999) also argues that an English parliament would not settle the issues devolution aimed to answer, over centralisation and lack of democratic accountability. Only by splitting England up, balance would be assured. Marr (1992) also notes that as Westminster's power is dependent on maintaining a constitutionally centralised system and the prominence of British nationalism, constitutional change is unlikely.

### 2.2.4 Conclusion

This section concludes that Scotland's unionisms are fractured, most academics confer that it is terminal decline, in part a failure to stem welfare division (McEwan, 2002), the lack of a coherent and unifying British identity (Mycock, 2012), and the slow pace of Westminster decentralisation (Bogdanor, 1999; Colley, 2014). This review also finds that significant historical and political institutions link Scotland with the UK on elements of culture, democracy, security, and economy, however, the importance of these links

to Scotland continue to erode. Characteristics of the union can still be identified, but their contestation suggest that Scotland is committed only to a union on grounds of its historical links as the role of welfare nationalism has pivoted towards the national rather than state level (McEwan, 2002).

## 2.3 Norden

This chapter reviews the regional union dynamics of Norden. Whilst Norden appears an anomaly in unification literature, there are similar societal and political bonds that underpin their diverse cooperative structures. This chapter first investigates the typology of Norden as a union before establishing the unionisms that bond it. It argues that there are two pivotal features of contemporary Nordicity, being the defence of the Nordic model of welfare, in addition to an emerging security emphasis. This chapter then argues that the examples of Finland and Estonia suggest not only that Norden is a flexible union framework, but also that the membership is viable for elites that consciously engage in the reorientation a nation state towards the values of the region.

### 2.3.1 Definitions

The nation-states of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden are sometimes seen as a homogenous region colloquially as Nordic or Scandinavian, rather than distinct national entities (Arter, 2006). Whereas there some contestation in the UK union typology, Norden is simpler in some respects yet elusive in others. For example, despite the region's cohesive impression, sourcing academic material on their unification is difficult due the harmonised and flexible nature of its cooperative institutions (Etzioni, 2001). Sundelius and Wiklund (1979) argue that it is unfair to label the region as the 'ugly duckling' of regional cooperation as doing so dismisses its relevance and overstates its uniqueness in theory, especially as European cooperation contains many of Norden's original features such as a passport union.

Norden is an inter-parliament cooperative union based upon multiple bi-lateral organisations, such as the Nordic council, Nordic council of ministers, NORDEFECO, and Nordic-Baltic cooperation (Waever, 1992; Arter, 2006; Lagerspetz, 2009). NORDEFECO rather than command in defence, it focuses on cooperation of senior political and military personnel as well as defence procurement and military education (McEwan, 2014). The Nordic Council is a largely unique organisation where elected representative meet to focus on culture, education, training and environmental rights for example.

Sundelius and Wiklund (1979) argue that both Nordic Council of ministers and Nordic council are not in any sense supranational, as national authority is supreme, rather which regional conventions occur through parallel national legislation. Etzioni (2001) adds that the lack of supranational integration is over-responsive in that it limits regional identification and regional development, maintaining national

sovereignty is strong factor in what he describes it as a stable union, but one that scarcely grows. Its agreements are based on shared values and ends, Lagerspetz (2003). Peculiarly for a union, in cases where there no consensus, countries can opt to do as they wish, a result of continual and oft intergovernmental deliberation. The emphasis on regional building pits Norden as a post-sovereign and transnational union, bound by cultural and political shared values.

One of the primary functions and successes of Nordic cooperation according to Hilson (2010) has been to present the region as cohesive and united to the world. The promotion of integration on social security and passport unions, and to promote culture through informal cooperation have been seen by Hilson (2010) Browning (2007), Sundelius, and Wiklund (1979) to be emblematic successes of Nordic regionality, despite the EU later utilising these principles. This framework for success has meant that a Nordic group has influence on many levels, be it EU, Arctic Council and UN (Hilson, 2010; Arter, 2006). Burch (2010) crucially indicates that Norden is synonymous with Nordic cultural and political identity, and in turn is a powerful 'add-on' identity for nation-states. Browning (2009) also asserts that 'Nordic' tag gains these countries a bigger profile than their World position grants. Therefore, the Nordic tag appears to strengthen national identity rather than diminishing it (Burch, 2010).

### 2.3.2 Societal union

The region has a broad cultural identity wrapped up in layers consisting of its geographical periphery, shared histories, language, Lutheran faith, more prominently the Nordic social model and cooperative organs (Landgren and Lagerspetz, 2003; Burch, 2010). Burch (2010) argues that a familial sentiment Nordic binds Norden together, that citizen's feel they are members of an imagined Nordic family. If this is the case, then Scottish political elites would need to express many cultural and familial ties in order to strengthen unification. Norden therefore refers to more than cooperation, as Strang (2016), Browning (2007) and Burch (2010) all argue that being 'Nordic' has played a significant part in the narratives of each of the five primary members, and also its immediate peripheries Estonia and Greenland (Browning, 2007; Hilson, 2010; Strang, 2016). For Hilson (2010) Norden has been particularly important for Iceland and the autonomous regions for providing a forum for national self-assertion, and in this respect, Scottish use of Norden may invoke a similarity.



Cultural harmony is not all it appears, as contemporary literature by Neumann (2014), Adler-Nissen, and Gad (2014) argue that colonialism is also increasingly problematic for the Nordic countries. However, unlike the UK, Denmark and Sweden's imperial conquests have not received the same level of sustained critique (Palmberg 2009). Thus, Greenland's presence and formal function in Norden through the Nordic Council overplays its cultural homogeneity (Arter, 2006). Greenland's membership poses problems of the ability for others to join Norden as their position as associate member of the Nordic Council means that their membership is likely to be prioritised according to Hilson (2010), with Denmark having largely eliminated Greenland's old subservient relationship (Thisted, 2013).

Images of cultural homogeneity also cause issues, as Strang (2016) articulates that Nordic cooperation is called upon for ideological reasons by the radical right to protect Nordic culture or linguistic community. Notions of exceptionalism and superiority on an international stage form neo-Nordism that could contain racist or xenophobic connotations. Contemporary issues such as border closures and hostility towards migrants in Denmark could have a consequential impact on regional cooperation. The tensions exacerbated by these issues in turn could explain a continual divergence and increasingly national rather than regional framing.

### 2.3.3 Security union

Alike the UK, Norden has been mired by questions over its contemporary relevance especially in terms of security, as Gotz (2003) argued that the increased hegemony of the EU and divergent views on NATO membership amongst nation-states mean that Norden falls short of being a cohesive region. Joennemi (2007) further adds that Nordic peace and security arrangement is not a successful model for emulation. Rather than regional unity, national interests drive individual foreign policies.

These questions have arguably become less potent as the Nordic Council's longevity and its recalibrated security dimension mean that Nordic cooperation continues to be both relevant and changing (Strang 2015; Forsberg, 2010). Security has become a more uniting remit according to Forsberg (2010) and Strang (2015), resulting from complex geopolitical challenges such as Ukraine and the Arctic area. In the context of these geo-political challenges, Nordic security cooperation is now more pronounced. The emergence of Arctic issues have also increased security dynamics in relation to Russia and USA (Sorlin, 2013; Haukalla and Etzold, 2011). On defence issues in particular, the Baltic countries have fought alongside Denmark in

an increasingly US led foreign policy (Mouritzen, 2006; Aylott, 2015). The emergence of Arctic issues due to global warming, provide the region with pertinent importance, strong arctic presence has come to conceptualises modern day Norden relations (Sörlin, 2013).

Contrary to a prominent internationalist Nordic identity, the idea of a security union is not contemporary. Sundelius and Wikland (1979) claim that the community's initial bond was as a security community, and subsequently developed to pursue sector solutions. Forsberg (2010) believes that security is no longer a side-line issue in Nordic cooperation. In a military sense modern involvement by Denmark and Norway in NATO and the conflicting debate in Sweden and Finland, articulate a Norden that is incompatible with established visions of peace (Archer, 1999; Ingebritsen, 2006; Browning, 2007). The decline of intensity that Nordic cooperation pursues issues such as welfare and culture, mean that the Nordic social model unionism that Lagerspetz (2003) argues, no longer holds the same resonance. Nordic security arrangements also differ comprehensively from NATO membership to foreign aid (Browning, 2007; Bailes et al.2013; Tiilikainen, 2007).

Norden is often critiqued for its divergent external relations agenda (Gotz, 2007). European unity has for one, led to different alignments, as Ingebritsen (2006) argues that Norway and Denmark follow a British vision of Europe where national authorities have increased vested power and a more Atlanticist security policy. Sweden and Finland in contrast follow a German model of integration (Ingebritsen, 1998). Rather than undermining Norden it has arguably continued its presence as a conscious player (Ingebristen, 2006; Arter, 2008). These disparities in external relations approach highlight the transnationalism and flexibility in the Nordic approach that do not contradict its image as a cohesive region.

#### 2.3.4 Political union

The region's approach to socio-economics and consensual systems underpin Norden's political union. Particularly built on the absence of partisan conflict according to Sundelius, Wikland (1979), Hancock (1972), Tilton (1990), and Harvey (2015) argue that consensus, moderation and compromise have been the norm in a number of areas such as governing practices and wage bargaining.

Egalitarian social democracy is Norden's most understood cooperative symbol of the region according to Browning (2007). Esping-Andersen characterises the Nordic model as emphasising the universalism de-

commodification of social rights, which is heavily reliant on achieving full employment to reduce the burden on welfare spending (Esping-Andersson, 1990; Arter, 2006; Keating and Harvey, 2013). Lister (2009) attributes the success of Nordic model is marrying up economic competitiveness and social justice. Brandal et al, (2013), Tilton (1990) and Anderson (2009) argue too that the model consists of a curious individualism, especially amongst Swedish social democratic theorists who argue that this model ensures that liberty is maximised, and that once freed from the traps of unemployment and insecurity, people are free to pursue maximum freedoms. Hilson and Newby (2015) argue that developments in welfare across the nations have been transnational in character and based on comparison and exchange. According to Aylott (2015), the Nordic model in particular continues to enjoy high popular legitimacy, a contrast to the perception that Norden has lost its global meaning. (Lagerspetz, 2003; Andersson, 2009). Bratberg et al., (2013) add that global perception remains that Norden has done the most to curb inequalities and provide universal access to a range of public sector services which is unparalleled anywhere else in the world.

One of the primary contestations is whether the model is teleological. Iceland and Finland do not share an equally consistent narrative in the establishment of their social democratic models (Jonsson, 2013; Lagerspetz, 2003), although Frederik Castles (1978) disputes this in reference to Finland having a successful social democrat party prior to the revolution. Iceland too historically articulates traits of egalitarianism centuries before developments in mainland Scandinavia (Tomasson, 1991). More recently, Finland is attributed to rejuvenating the Nordic model a result of their reaction to the economic crash of 1990's (Hilson, 2010). Bratberg et al., (2013) also suggest that the routes of Norwegian and Danish welfare states drew more from the UK experience than Swedish one, as exiled elites mirrored Beveridge's ambitions. This suggests that a cohesive historical trajectory of developing the Nordic model is undermined.

Although its origins may be contested, it is the ability to conserve their welfare systems that spark interest amongst some academics. Problematic to its survival is that nationalism underpins the social-democratic project, where Tilton (1990), Marklund (2010), and Brandal et al., (2013) all highlight the 'folkshem' as a fight against the right, by using similar and patriotic language for social purposes. This has translated into the foundations of radical-right party success across the region. Jenny Andersson (2009) argues that increasing welfare nationalism is a poignant problem in Nordic societies. The success of the Norwegian Progress party is an example that discussion on immigration highlights the vulnerability of the Nordic model and its exclusiveness to the social democratic parties, as radical right parties have utilised the Nordic Model to espouse welfare chauvinist rhetoric (Bjorklund, 2012; Kivisto and Wahlbeck, 2013;

Mudde, 2007; Demker, 1992; Andersson and Hilson, 2009). Whilst it is used as a model to export according both Browning (2006) and Andersson (2009), the problem arises that these models are by definition exclusive as countries like Sweden have clearly been less happy to learn from others.

The prominence of the Nordic model in its cooperative, or at least external image means that Norden is symbolically utilised as a critique of capitalist society (Tilton, 1990; Strang, 2016). The financial crisis of 2008 prompted some scholars to reassess Nordic cooperation as a protective measure for a certain egalitarian world-view (Forsberg, 2013). Relayed as a rejection of the US and UK models of economic development (Ingebritsen, 2006), it is framed as a commitment to alleviating poverty through universalism rather than minimalist welfare approaches (Ingebritsen, 2006; Esping-Anderson, 1996; Keating and Harvey, 2014).

Gender equality and Norden's distinct approach to justice also extend from its transnational cooperation (Kautto et al., 2011; Lister 2009; Barker, 2012; Barry and Leonardsen, 2006; Wollebæk et al., 2012). Kautto et al. (2001), argue that it is relevant to speak of a Nordic model of gender equality that focuses on equal parental leave and less gender regulated working hours. Lister (2009) suggests for that reason, Norden appears positively in UK literature. Hilson (2008) too argues that the Nordic states are overwhelmingly positive in this respect where they have distinctively high proportion of female participation in parliament and government. This is another arena, an additional tenet Nordic model that according to Lister (2003) means that external nations can desire, the Nordic model is equally not just one, but many models in which form the regions cooperative institutions. Although Kautto et al., (2001) note that pro-familism is a distinctive difference in Norway, overall, the Nordic countries have achieved and converged the most on the issue.

Booth (2014) also illustrates how justice has been 'Nordicised', arguing that the Norwegian Prime Minister, Stoltenberg's response to Anders Breivik terror attack further illustrates a resurrection of the region's importance as a moral compass and a response to Anglo-American reaction to terrorism. Stoltenberg's (2013; Booth, 2014) response to the attacks being 'more democracy, more openness, and more humanity'. Barry and Leonardsen (2006) argue, however, that despite low rates of inequality and less penal populism, in both Sweden and Norway an increased punitivism is slowly replicating Anglo-American countries. Takala (2004) adds that although Nordic penal policy is not theoretically original, the regional cooperation underpinning it remains distinctive in its success of crime prevention.

### 2.3.5 Membership

Membership and expansion of Norden is a particularly important aspect of this study. Regardless of how elites construct and use Norden in a unionist sense, a brief critique of Norden's membership identifies two positions, one that Norden is closed, or alternatively, that with strategic political and societal orientation, unification is attainable.

Hilson (2010) predicts that autonomous regions such as Greenland would be a priority for membership rather than external polities such as Estonia or Scotland. Strang (2016) and Etzold (2016) indicate a more limited ideal of Norden than Hilson, arguing that it is likely to remain limited to the 'five' Nordic countries despite the region being very keen to engage with the world cooperating with UK, Ireland and Baltics within the Northern Economic Forum and on a global scale through the UN. As Norden have re-emerged as a 'successful' brand, Strang (2016) argues it may be that it is important not to create vague and confusing images of the region (Andersson and Hilson, 2009; Strang, 2016). The perceived failure of Estonian membership of Norden is also indicative of an exclusive region according to Moisiu et al., (2009).

Feldman (2000) argues that Estonia has multiple identity discourses at play, but being in union with Norden helps to distinguish themselves from being 'just another post-socialist' country. Feldman (2000) and Kuldkepp (2013) argue that this ambition also stems from a popular belief that Swedish occupation was more positive than Russian occupation. While Estonia has had significant setbacks in its unification with Norden, Kuldkepp (2013) argues that notions of a Nordic Estonia have been resilient and have survived further European integration and globalisation. Although Estonia's use of Norden was extremely superficial, current President Ilves' (1999) speech in the nineties indicated that he saw Estonia as part of a pan Nordic community, a 'yule land' that comprised of Norden and notably the UK. Much of this speech aimed to distinguish Estonia from the Baltic's a term that reflected old colonial images enforced upon them (Kuldkepp, 2013). In the same vein, Scottish use of Norden may also possess these features, exemplifying Scotland as an alternative to the UK.

In contrast, Finland provides an example of successful strategic orientation and unification with Norden. Lagerspetz (2009) and Moisiu (2009) argue that Finland was particularly successful in transforming its identity from 'fourth Baltic state' to Nordic state in 1955, where a conscious choice of Nordic foreign policy alignment and joining the Nordic Council were visible elements of their unionism. Finland is now relatively synonymous with Norden and in particular synonymous with the region's distinct welfare model. To

Estonia, the Nordic countries were role models after becoming independent from the Soviet Union and seen particularly as regional security partners (Lagerspetz, 2003; Browning, 2007; Aylott, 2014). For academics such as Lagerspetz (2003) and Burch (2010), Estonia's attempt to join the Council was rejected as a result of superficial unification, where politicians often aligned Estonia to Norden through cultural symbols rather than coherent social-democratic programme crucial for unification.

Ultimately, Estonia's case also rests in elite failure to promote a social-democratic Estonian political culture (Lagerspetz, 2003; Moisio et al., 2010). Although Moisio et al., (2009) also points to the Nordic region as being exclusionary, the limited nature of Estonia's orientation towards redefining its geopolitical space as Nordic *and* western, adopting symbols rather than institutional values decisive to Nordic cooperation led to its struggle for membership of Norden (Ilves, 1999; Lagerspetz, 2009). If Norden tried to export their social model, Browning (2007) argues that it seems unlikely that the Estonians were convinced of the benefits. Archer (1999) argues that whilst the region has been concerned with the security developments of Estonia, they have tended to refrain from offering a concrete arrangement resulting from the regions incoherent security remit. Aylott (2014), however, argues that Estonia's repositioning is translating somewhat to forming a common geopolitical space and their ambition to join the council may lead to a long-term Nordic cooperative model. Especially given the role of Russia in contemporary Nordic security concerns, Estonia continues to draw assistance and inspiration from a Nordic region (Aylott, 2014).

### 2.3.6 Conclusion

In regards to the expansion of Norden, Hilson (2010), Simm, and Seppel (2014) argue that the discussion on Baltic integration is an intellectual and academic issue rather than one felt by citizens in the Nordic countries. Lagerspetz's (2007) main argument is that due to the pliable Nordic cooperative framework, any country can essentially join, but it is essential that there is significant political will. As Estonia's position is in effect ongoing, it is dependent largely therefore on Scottish political elites and how they invoke the different Nordic unionisms as to whether union is an option. Norden is an overtly discursive construct as the region's articulation by external actors is as incremental to shaping what Norden is as much as internal elites construct it (Burch, 2010; Browning, 2007). Strang (2015) further suggest that different Nordens can be invoked, such as a neo-liberal, populist, progressive and leftist, depending on the different legacies (Strang, 2016). Ultimately, however, Lagerspetz (2003) and Forsberg's (2010) view on Norden remains prominent, unification is embedded in their cooperative model, a commitment to

social democracy, bi-lateral cooperation, and to a smaller but increasing extent, a regional security dimension.

## 2.4 Towards a different union?

The United Kingdom and Norden offer two distinctive and largely polarised models of union, and conversely, these have had a particularly powerful role in the construction of a potential Scottish independent statehood as this next chapter deliberates. Norden appears as a juxtaposition against Westminster, a basis for modelling external relations with rUK and Ireland in the result of independence, and additionally, a basis for direct cooperation with the region. This chapter begins by understanding the context culminating in ambitions for Scottish independence from rUK, and secondly highlights studies that invoke elite discourse on Norden.

This chapter concludes that with Scotland's unionisms with the UK in serious decline, the idea of joining one union for another is plausible desire of elites sympathetic to independence. Many of the Nordic references featured in the literature appear to stem from devolution, notably the collapse of the UK's welfare unionism and space for the Scottish Government to form an external relations agenda. Despite this link, scholarly literature tends to devote itself to analysing the construction of a Nordic model in Scotland, rather than assessing direct unification with Norden.

Scotland's attachment to its current union with rUK is of high interest in academia, as a scholarly split between declinism and endism conveys a future of uncertainty. Many of the unionisms deliberated in the United Kingdom chapter have intensified Scotland's declining attachment, particularly welfare unionism, political structures and UK external relations. To some academics, the structures of the union are most detrimental to the unionist cause. Endists such as Aughey (2010) and Christopher Harvie (2000) argue that the union's structures have disintegrated to the extent that independence is inevitable.

These fractures have to Aughey (2010) and Cohen (1995) amounted to identity issues, with Britishness becoming a term warped with connotations and has become increasingly peripheral despite Scotland's heavy involvement. Devine (2005), along with Kidd (2010) speak more of declinism rather endism for the union, they have a more positive belief, particularly highlighting Scotland as instigators of a union stemming prior to the formal act of 1707 as means of stemming England's imperial ambitions. Marr (1992) too, argued that home rule would be likely as result of desire for a lively parliament and strong economy. This is indicative of aspirations of a political rejuvenation, leading to understandings of Westminster to be problematic rather than a total rejection of union.



Alvin Jackson (2012, p.354) also supports this idea that the union is at political breaking point, symbolic of this is the capitulation of the Labour party in Scotland and the plight of the Conservatives, leading to the dismantling of the unionist consensus in Scottish politics. A leftist movement since 1950's is an integral part of this demise (Marr, 1992; Jackson, 2012). This suggests that Scottish secessionist political landscape is by virtue leftist, and that the decline of even the British Labour party is a rejection of the UK political system. Just as Tierney (2007) argues that devolution was ad hoc and Lindsey Paterson (2015) adds that despite the unprecedented democratic defence of the union, Scotland's place in the union continually evolves on pragmatic adjustments of ceded sovereignty. The union is still under pressure, as the ceded sovereignty is only enough to retain the union, the next challenge to the union has been sown prior to the result of the referendum.

The SNP's approach to the European issue, that they would seek 'independence in Europe', presents the first sign that Scotland may actually leave its current union in favour of another (Herd and McLoughlin, 2011). Gallagher (2009, p.534) notes that under Alex Salmond's leadership, the SNP had no qualms in embracing the idea of 'leaving one union in order to join another', indicating that independence is suggestive of a change of political attitudes and relationship, rather than autonomy. Ben Jackson (2014) proposes that Scottish nationalism is post-sovereign, which incrementally implies that Scotland's independence political elite favour a largely transnational approach to unionism that situates Norden amongst a larger framework as Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone (2013) identify. It is further amplified by the SNP's construction of a dual social democratic Scottish and European identity that intentionally excludes Britishness (Herd and McLoughlin, 2011; Sutherland, 2005; Dardanelli, 2006).

Cairney (2011) argues that blurred boundaries in Scottish devolved external relations capabilities has mean that distinct Scottish Government positions on the EU and informal Nordic cooperation have been able to emerge. Whilst relatively unchanged from Westminster, the SNP led Scottish government has taken a regional tone with advances in informal cooperation with its northern European neighbours. Salmon (2000) argues that this was particularly inevitable due to common features such as geographical periphery and regional development (2000). Salmon (2000) and Newby (2009) further argue that a focuses on the Highlands and Islands in particular with the Nordic region forms part of Scotland's IGR potential.

The referendum on independence in 2014 intensified endist claims, and a notable feature of the independence campaign was to present Norden as a viable external relations option. Malcolm Harvey (2015, p.255) argues that advocates of Scottish independence were keen to present a Nordic inspired

Scotland that only independence could deliver, but describes them as 'envious glances'. Harvey's (2015) position portrays Norden as purely aspirational, but indicates that many in the Scottish independence movement see Norden as an alternate model and as regional neighbours (Newby and Hilson, 2015).

Cairney (2011) argues that despite opportunities to reshape Scottish international relations, there has been a general continuity despite attempts to construct positions on aid (Malawi and China) and cooperation with 'Arc of Prosperity' (Iceland, Ireland and Norway). This suggests that despite publicised efforts, formalised cooperation with the Nordic region is less important than a reformed relationship with the UK. Alternatively, some scholars believe that Norden serves as a role model for a rejuvenated British-Irish Council. The Nordic Council applies also as an example of how post-devolution UK could renegotiate insular relationships to reflect a partnership of roughly equal interests (Newby, 2009).

Scholars like Qvortrup (2009) and Bogdanor (2009) have focussed on the issue of a revived and restructured union centred on an independent Scotland, arguing that a Nordic styled British-Irish Council is an immediate consideration. This strategy emphasises Scotland's stronger societal links to the UK and indicates that Scotland's primary concern is a union with rUK on different terms, a Nordic style UK rather than Nordic Scotland and therefore links with Norden are purely of political aspiration. According to McEwan (2014), however, with a small secretariat and lack of a decision making body it is unlikely to be able to support future Scottish-rUK-Irish relations.

Only a few studies assess Scotland's direct position on Norden. Most notably Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone (2013) work suggests that cooperation with the Nordic Council and West Nordic group is a genuine aspiration alongside options such as rUK, EU and NATO. It strengthens Ben Jackson's (2014) suggestion that the SNP invokes a post-sovereign articulation of national identity. Furthermore, Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone (2013) argue that an independent Scotland may look for political and cultural security through the Nordic Council, but maintain relations with rUK for security and societal purposes is a priority (Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone 2013). They argue that due to the role of Russia as the region's problematic actor, Scotland would leave itself exposed without some formal union with rUK (Archer, 2000; Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone 2013). This may also account for a lack of distinct IGR policy under the SNP led Scottish Government as Cairney (2011) pronounces.

The dawn of a new Scottish Parliament engaged a crucially energetic debate on the direction of Scotland's political future, and in this, Norden was idealised for the political model of consensus, in contrast to perceptions of Westminster's adversarial and majoritarian framework. A Nordic style consensual

democracy, characterised by free debate and compromise, spurred wishes for a new politics and supported differentiation with Westminster (Newby, 2009; Arter, 2005; Aylott, 2014). Its parliamentary processes on the other hand are more akin to a Western European or Icelandic model of governance (Arter, 2005). Failure to live up to expectations is due to the 'new politics' being based on a rejection of the majoritarian politics of Westminster according to Cairney and Widfeldt (2015).

Structurally consensus politics never materialised, as the minimum-winning-coalition mentality is a reproduction of UK majoritarian history and contrasts with a Nordic system where most opposition parties are consulted routinely (Cairney and Widfeldt, 2015). Newby (2009) and Arter (2005) identify the committee process as being close to Nordic operations and that 'new' politics is as a rhetorical device exacerbating the political differences between Westminster and Holyrood parliaments.

Consensual politics was the structural basis for a transformation in Scotland's civic identity and where its politics were to be Europeanised than UK's adversarial setup (Arter, 2004; 2005; Cairney, 2011). Regardless of its success or failure, these analyses indicate one approach by Scotland's political elite in aligning the identity of Holyrood with formally recognised symbols of the Nordic model. Aside from the underachievement, the focus in literature on Scotland's ambition for consensual parliament and Nordic welfare prompt a belief that Scotland's Nordic unionism is indeed political more than societal.

Significant academic attention assesses the SNP's or Scotland's ability to establish a variant of the Nordic model of social democracy and or consensus democracy. Rather than investigating the SNP and Scottish Government's proposed membership of the Nordic Council, it is reflective of a belief either that being Nordic is solely based on their egalitarian model, or that developing a Nordic model is intrinsic to regional cooperation.

Malcolm Harvey (2015) and Bratberg (2013) argue that Scotland is following a distinctive trajectory that would fall short of a Nordic model that requires heavy amount of consensus, tripartite bargaining and universalism. Hassan (2013) also argues that the inconvenient truth is that Scotland cannot develop a Nordic model, mostly because of its relationship to Anglo-American capitalism and that historical and economic conditions that helped develop Nordic model is contrary to Scotland's development. Similarly, Hassan (2013, p.119) wonders how groups address Scotland's part in the Anglo-sphere, its shared legacy and language. Newby (2009) argues though, that their approach to Nordic Model also ignores the internal

issues of Norden such as increasing liberalisation and divergent approaches to multiculturalism (Andersson, J., 2009).

The activities of the SNP and Scottish Parliament provide examples that imply the Nordic model is exportable (Newby, 2009; Browning, 2006; Lister, 2010). Similarly, Cairney and Widfelt (2015) believe that significant structural change is required for them to replicate many of the democratic and social-investment models that are intrinsic to the often-romanticised images of the region. Unlike Harvey, they do not assert that history suggests Scotland cannot. Whilst some of these principles are desirable in Scottish politics, the model comes as a package. This approach is limited in that at Scotland's ability to Nordic model, and presupposes that realisation of the model as the only element of defining Scotland as a Nordic nation.

Rather than reinvigorating Scottish belief in the union, devolution has meant that Scottish identity has taken a civic tone, juxtaposed against a British identity often perceived as ethnic Eurosceptic and neo-liberal (Cairney, 2011; Soule, 2012; Marr, 2014; Keating and Harvey, 2014). Through a strategic civic national identity, the independence movement has propelled distinctions with rUK based on elements of progressive social democracy and consensual political culture. These ambitions have as understood by Arter (2005) and Newby (2009), been particularly powerful in aligning Scotland independence as a Nordic alternative to rUK.

This distinction process is also evident in views on migration where McCollum et al., (2014) argue that an increasingly associated view of Scotland as more welcoming to migration than rUK is prominent. Seen in the context of limited operating powers at Holyrood and attitudinal data that shows that the electorate do not share this view, the framing of Scottish identity amongst the SNP is therefore problematic (Niedziedz and Kadlek-Eltanani, 2014). Andrew Mycock (2010) argues that the SNP's construction of civic Scottish political identity is weak, as it intentionally seeks to highlight incoherencies of British identity such as empire and modern Commonwealth despite that the fact that these are shared contribution in shaping contemporary Scottish values and identity.

Soule (2012), however, notes that differentiation between Scotland and Westminster is a result of the new parliament and long term Scottish institutions, which means that Scots can distinguish more clearly their state (British) from their national (Scottish) identities. In doing so it allows Scots to visibly detach themselves from their statehood, to imagine themselves in various political guises be it Nordic, European

and British. David Torrance (2015) equally suggests that unionist and nationalist terms are irrelevant because Scots are both of these at the same time, it is merely a question of degree. This indicates that the political union is the source of contention for nationalists, not the identification of many Scots as secondly British.

In addition to political orientation, there is a cultural element to Scottish use of Norden identified by Brandal and Bratberg (2015). They believe that links to Norden conjure up Scotland's historical Viking connections. Newby (2009) too argues that these are utilised to recall a specific Scottish past, a time before the Union, where Scotland had more control over its economic destiny. Once both seaward empires, now divided into consensus and adversarial models of democracy.

There are additional factors for increasing reference to Norden, for instance, Andersson (2009) suggests that increased positive portrayal of the region in popular culture has led to the revival of the region in international use (Andersson, 2009, Lister, 2010, Booth, 2013, Kingsley, 2012). Additionally, the recent economic success of Norway and other Nordic states has led Aylott (2015), Bratberg et al., (2013) and Strang (2016) to cite a revived interest in Norden's social investment strategies as a model of best practice. Invoking Norden has not been monopolised by the SNP, but also deployed by unionist parties. David Cameron and Ed Miliband, who have publically admired policy initiatives, and according to Powell (2013) for Eurosceptic conservatives, the ability of Nordic states to opt-out on certain memberships is a persuasive image of Norden as a powerful group of independent states (Lister, 2010; Powell, 2013; Johnstone, 2013).

A final point that arises from literature is as Newby (2009) identifies, that the SNP and the Scottish Green Party use Norden to reference Scotland's ability to become a successful independent nation-state, however, studies have avoided groups such as Radical independence and Nordic Horizons, despite these groups' calls to learn from Nordic neighbours. Furthermore, whilst political parties have been undeniably important in structuring the alternatives on offer, Newby (2009) and Hilson (2010) identify a lack of wider public participation the Nordic debate, something that particularly sets Nordic Scotland as an elite conversation.

Most academics confer that Scotland's union with rUK is fractured and in some cases experiencing terminal decline. This is in part a failure to stem welfare division (McEwan, 2002), the lack of a coherent and unifying British identity (Mycock, 2012), and the slow pace of Westminster decentralisation

(Bogdanor, 1999; Colley, 2014). This review also finds that many scholars believe that Scotland is likely to retain significant societal, economic and security links with rUK in the event of independence (Bailes et al., 2013). The decline in unionisms suggests that Scottish pro-independence movement is committed only to a union on grounds of its societal links, as the role of welfare nationalism has pivoted towards the national rather than state level, rather than a political union (McEwan, 2002). As Gallagher and Ben Jackson argue (2014), Scottish independence movement has no qualms in leaving one union for another in reference to the EU, and as Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone (2013) argue, the movement considers consolidating formal links with Norden.

Formalised cooperation with Norden is the focus of only a limited body of literature, with references mainly to the subject of Norden as a template for the British-Irish Council or as a model of welfare and consensus. Only the studies of Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone (2013) really engage in the idea of Scotland actively seeking a formal role in Norden's cooperative institutions. This review, however, does reflect that the considerable amount of studies analysing Scotland's ability to replicate a Nordic model are vital, in that they project an belief that elite's interest in the Nordic model may be its singular aim and perpetuate the link between Norden and its prized welfare model. Lagerspetz (2007), Strang (2016) and Forsberg (2013) contend, however, that numerous Nordic unionisms are equally strategic and important to the regions identity and cooperation. Is an aspiration for Nordic levels of equality amounting to future cooperation? By tapping into a popularised version of the region, is Scottish use of Norden part of a planned process of state building?

## 2.5 Analytical Model

The literature review uncovered an area in which has had less coverage, namely Scottish membership of Norden, rather than scholarly attention to the creation of a Scottish Nordic model. Given the changing dynamics of unionism and propensity in which nationalist movement seek a multilateral approach to identity and unionism (Bollens, 2008; Keating, 2007), applying the structures of unionism against elites understanding of both unions addresses this fundamental gap. By establishing what type of union elites favour, it is evident whether Norden acts as a union template for an empowered British Isles framework, or as a union with Norden. Thereby continuing the trend of literature in this area, the thesis works upon the model of unionism, otherwise known as 'shelters' proposed by Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone (2013) as this framework uncovers the extent elites favour a specific type of union.

The literature review finds that Finland and Estonia highlight the significant impact of elites in consciously aligning elements of its national identity with that of Nordic unification. These conscious designs encompass wider features of the cooperation model consistent with different models of security, democracy etc. Despite Estonia's failure in Council membership, strong ties bind them with Norden on security issues and it has not deterred them from branding themselves as a Nordic nation. its shows cherry picking is not a path but rather elites need to drive formal membership of cooperative institutions, be it council, NORDEFECO or west Nordic council (Aylott, 2014); Kuatto et al., 2003; Lagerspetz, 2002).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Aims and Objectives

The aims of this project are to assess how elite actors of the Scottish independence movement articulate Scotland's union with the UK and its potential union with Norden, the extent that these images are coherent with literature, and the purpose of these links. In order to examine these aims, the following three research questions form the basis of the inquiry.

*How do Independence-supporting elites interpret UK unionisms?*

*How do independence-supporting elites interpret Nordic unionisms?*

*Is their use of Norden a rejection of the UK's unionisms, a desire to be Nordic, or desire for a reconstructed Isles framework?*

To assess these developments, a qualitative approach maximises contemporary understanding of Nordic and UK unionisms amongst the Scottish Independence movement. Specifically, a thematic analysis of public discourse, content and personal interview data from six actors of different movements sympathetic to Scottish independence forms the basis of this study. Interviewing actors from the SNP, Scottish Green Party, Radical Independence Campaign, Nordic Horizons, National Collective and Common Weal, enables us to understand the context for change in union with rUK, and to understand the themes that are used to present Nordic unification in Scotland. A thematic approach will be effective in situating Elite discourse directly to established scholarly literature on the subject. It allows the research to identify common themes and articulate how Scottish independence elites use Nordic unionism in independence debates. In order to generalise understanding in relation to theoretical positions and pertain critical analysis within a wider field (Yin, 2009, Flick, 2015), this thesis aligns with literature on Scotland's relationship with Norden and within the field of unification and unionism. This thesis situates alongside the writings of Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone (2013) in particular in applying a similar framework. There are few elite focussed studies on Scotland's association that applies the same scope of Nordic regional identity, and



none which include discussion on the majority of groups sympathetic to independence (Hilson, 2009; Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone 2013; Harvey, 2015).

The analysis uses two data sets, firstly, documentary sources such as online content and group publications, and secondly primary interview data. Not all groups have deliberated explicitly on the Nordic model or cooperation, and some do to a larger extent than others, however, significantly overlapping influences and the fluidity of membership calls for a more flexible and diverse approach rather than systematically attaching the phenomena to specific groups. Some of the interviewees have been a member or activist in more than one of the groups associated with independence. Through taking this approach, it is easier to identify different contents of the nationalism and unionisms in the Scottish independence movement as explicit symbols and markers of Scottish identity (Finlayson, 1998). It also challenges key personnel, through semi-structured interview to reflect on the groups' relationship to rUK, their understanding of Nordic identity, and finally, whether they believe Scotland could become a Nordic country. Through the semi-structured interviews, this thesis analyses all three research questions, supported more routinely with collected data on the wider group, which seeks to identify commonalities and differences amongst Scottish elite and independence community. Overall, by using data sets, this thesis aims to reflect the intention, context, and understanding of Nordic and UK unionisms.

### 3.2 Ontology and Epistemology

This thesis uses a constructionist approach in its understanding of the role elites play in framing and construction nationalisms and unions. A constructionist viewpoint is described by Braun and Clarke (2008) as meaning and experience which is produced and reproduced by society, thus also underlying the decision to use thematic analysis to search both latent and semantic themes. To Boeije (2010), constructionist understanding places individuals at the heart of meaning making, through which can be analysed through scopes like rhetoric, language and behaviour. This also relates to nation building and national identity literature where both Anderson (1991) and Gellner (1988) popularise imagined communities. Nations are imagined constructs, and in understanding that nature, this thesis starts with the premise that groups and individuals associated with the independence campaign are therefore involved heavily in the construction and framing of Scottish, British and Nordic unionisms. Understanding

that there are different contents of nationalism posits also that national identity is plural and multi-layered in nature (Finlayson, 1998; Moreno, 2001; Bechhoffer and McCrone, 2010). Keating's (2002) belief is that each society presents essentially competing histories to justify their national narratives. Furthermore, Sutherland (2005) suggests that a thematic analysis more accurately allows us to theorise these different nationalisms, as different discourses and content are used to assert one political struggle over another.

### 3.3 Research Approach

The use of qualitative approach to methodology aligns with the constructionist understanding of social reality, believing that individuals play a crucial and active role in the construction of reality (Boeije, 2010). Compared to quantitative study, qualitative research is not modelled on measurement, or guaranteeing representativeness, the main purpose is to integrate a number of cases according to their relevance (Flick, 2015). Flick (2015) argues it is particularly useful for grasping and identifying subjective and latent meaning from participants. Compared to quantitative methods, a qualitative approach allows theories to develop throughout the course of a thesis, rather than a point to be tested (Flick, 2015). The choice of method reflects the desire to understand the particular contents that makes up Scottish unionisms, putting it in both a contextual frame by interviews with political actors (Finlayson, 1998).

Subsequently, thematic analysis is applied to the qualitative data set formed of semi-structure interview data and a collection of content from the chosen groups. Braun and Clarke (2008) argue that thematic analysis provides both a rich detail and organised analysis. Compared to Rubin and Rubin's (1995) analysis of *discovering* themes, Braun and Clarke (2008) believe that it is too passive and neglects the role of the researcher in identifying themes. In addition, according to constructionist approach, grounded theory helps identify themes within the broader literature and connect it to theoretical understandings of unionism and Scottish and Nordic identities (Silverman, 2013; Braun and Clarke, 2008). Sutherland (2005) argues that research design takes consideration of context when analysing data.

Different content has been used in the view that each medium is a presentational technique that can be informative and persuasive (Culler, 1997; Van dijk, 2003). Using content allows a deeper and more direct analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Silverman, 2009). Additionally, a thematic analysis approach is crucial

for identifying commonalities and differences in data and helps to interpret these in richer detail alongside its context and scholarly application (Braun and Clarke, 2008). A Particular advantage of thematic approach is flexibility, especially its theoretical freedom that can help provide richer and more detailed account of data (Robson, 2011; Braun and Clarke, 2008). In reference to semi-structured interviews, the chosen approach allows the participant to reflect on additional elements and the Nordic relationship that may not have come about from prior deliberation. It allows a more accurate picture of their understanding (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

### 3.4 Sampling

This is a study of elite's role in constructing political identities. Due to their position of power in reference to shaping policy and establishing political narratives, elite interviews are particularly prominent in social research (Mikecz, 2012; Richardson, 2013; Darbi and Hall, 2014). Purposive and intensity sampling has therefore been undertaken for this research as the data and groups chosen, display features that construct the phenomenon of Nordic unification in Scotland (Denzon and Lincoln, 1994; Flick, 2015). It is intensive in that material is chosen that would reveal the most insight into this phenomena and articles, presentations and speeches have therefore been picked out because of their statements on issues relating to Nordic and UK unions. Groups and individuals used in this study have been sought out rather than at random as Denzon and Lincoln propose (1994, p. 202).

The SNP, Radical Independence, Scottish Green Party, Common Weal, National Collective and Nordic Horizons have publically referenced the Nordic Model or Nordic Cooperation throughout the period running up to the Independence referendum in 2014. Specifically, Common Weal and Nordic Horizons have been singled out by Gerry Hassan (2014, p.118) as pursuing independence with a sentiment based on Scotland becoming a Nordic and social democratic country. He also describes National Collective, Radical Independence Campaign (RIC) as groups in search of different kind of Scotland and society, one that shows dissatisfaction to the current Westminster system. Malcolm Harvey's (2015) research on Scotland and the Nordic model mentions briefly Nordic Horizons, Common Weal and Scottish government/ SNP's appetite for the Nordic social economic model. Due to Newby's (2009) examination

of Norden the Scottish Green Party are included. National Collective are examined due to the use of their website to promote various Nordic visions.

The fluidity in the movement, i.e. the ability of individuals to campaign with numerous groups is an element in which makes it difficult to pinpoint the exact belief of a group, but it does indicate the types of discussion on broader independence movement by including all of these important groups. It is more crucial too in opening up more wider discussion amongst party and movement affiliates than just the elites, as crucially, Peter Geoghegan (2015) articulates that SNP were seen as the YES campaign, much of the movement was in fact spontaneous and incoherent compared to a well-organised NO campaign. It also fits Laclau and Mouffe (1985) instructions that all groups have the potential to bring about social change (Sutherland, 2005). Trade unions, feminist lobbies etc. have the ability to influence nationalism, therefore the approach taken in this thesis follows that same logic, that groups outside the official YES campaign should be analysed even if some groups' deliberation on Scotland's links to Norden are limited.

### 3.5 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews have been utilised by this research to ease out and formulate additional questions that relate specifically to the group and individuals. Interview questions comprise of three areas, Scotland's identity and relationship to UK, Nordic identity and Scotland's relation to it, and finally Scotland's role in the World. They focus on the themes disseminating from the literature review, namely identifying the type of union elites aspire and their approach to the Nordic region and rUK (Robson, 2011, p.289). The type of questions have also allowed the participants maximum space (Harvey, 2011), including the ability to leave open their position on independence and relationship with the UK.

This helps to gage the subjective experiences of each participant, as the purpose of this study is to understand and uncover various versions of identity thus making semi-structured interview most flexible for a thematic approach (Robson, 2011). In addition, by interviewing elites it will provide some indication as to the motives for referencing Norden, and identify nuances amongst different independence groups. Although Newby (2009) critiqued elite use of Nordic identity and highlighted areas unexplored by data, he, like others indicates that in Scotland, use of Norden is primarily limited to an elite phenomenon. Testing how elites have altered their position over time is also incremental, so to understanding how elites frame Nordic identity has been under-analysed. It will also help ascertain why different narratives and

inconsistencies occur within the broader campaign and provide context on these respective groups' approaches.

Interviewing elites forms the basis of this study, and therefore present some unique issues. Calling political actors 'elites' stems from their prominence in the campaign organisations and public sphere. Although difficult to define, elites are people who occupy senior positions that have decision-making influence (Rice, 2009; W Harvey, 2011, p.233). Concerns over the process of interviewing are largely concerned with scrutiny, with Smith (2006) arguing that some elites, especially political elites feel threatened by the process despite having interview and media experience. Rice (2009) also identifies a challenge of maintaining positive relationships whilst developing critical standpoints within academic research. Gaining trust and access to leading activists of the independence movement has been crucial (Mikecz, 2012; Deakin and Wakefield, 2014). In order to overcome this, open ended, but targeted questions were formed for the interview, not only as part of an effective semi-structured approach (Robson, 2011), but also in accordance with William Harvey's (2011) suggestion that open-ended questions give elites space to articulate their views. By using this qualitative approach, the interviews have been more open and trust garnered with the participants.

Gaining access is also presented by Mikecz (2012) and Hunter (1995) as the serious issue which can significantly affect the quality of the data as well as the study experience. According to their positions as elites, they purposefully erect barriers which set them apart from rest of society, making access a challenge in the research project (Mikecz, 2012; Laurila, 1997). Significant a time period was allocated in the research design for contacting and gaining access to interview participants during this project, and in order to maximise the choice available to the participants, Skype has also been an available tool for conducting the interview. This is to allow both convenience and choice, and has subsequently been taken up by two of the participants, Lesley Riddoch and Cat Boyd (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014; Hanna, 2012). Skype has become an increasingly prominent source of communication for researchers and is used in reference to time and financial restraints, and replaces the general face-to-face interview (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014). Hanna (2012) also states that it is important for the participant to benefit from choice in the research medium, also an ethical consideration. It allows both researcher and participant to feel they are in a safe location and environment, making Skype a valuable commodity for this research project.

### 3.6 Data

Data for thematic and contextual analysis draws on three source types, publications, online content and interviews. Online content has largely be collated from sources such as Bella Caledonia, the Scottish Left Review, Open Democracy, the official websites of the SNP, Scottish Green Party, Common Weal, Nordic Horizons, Radical Independence and National Collective. Some of these websites and blogs developed as a response to the lack of independence supporting Scottish press (Geoghegan, 2015). All groups have utilised these sources to generate discussion and space for their views. For this reason, using these forms highlights the discussion within the wider movement. Literature has also been a feature of the independence discussions, Luath Press for example have published considerable referendum inspired publications from actors associated with the key groups. Articulation of nationhood and statehood through speeches and interviews has been an established medium used by the key actors, the SNP quite prominently, therefore a wide scope of literature, speeches, online content, blogs and videos form the data set alongside interview data (Newby, 2009).

### 3.7 Validity and Reliability

There can be some problems encountered in developing a research model, for example the stronger the researchers ideology or emotion, this could be an impact on the conceptualisation of the information (Boyatzis, 1998). It is noted therefore that political values do not problematize research as the researcher has no affiliation to any of the above groups and has not donated or campaigned on their behalf. To prevent any projection issues (Boyatzis, 1998), an explicit code identifies themes in the research, minimizing researcher ideological influence. In reference to the academic results, the research ambition is to identify the political will, consistency and the role of elites in shaping discussion on the Nordic model and Nordic identity in Scotland. By using content, we can examine the discussion by very active members alongside established leadership.

The data used is integral to the validity of this approach and study, making it as expansive and accurate as possible. For every group analysed there an interview with a founding or prominent advocate of the

movement, and at least 20 online articles, presentations or speeches per group that deliberate or provide perspective of Nordic association within the group. To assure the reflections are accurate and objective measures have been taken to look for negative evidence, seeking to disconfirm what you think is true, such as giving supervisors the data is highlighted by Colin Robson (2011, p.487) as integral, and will help ensure maximum quality. This is where the search has been extended to finding critical sources within the movements. Another crucial element of the research process has been in the transcribing documents personally, helping to familiarity with the context and the understandings of the interviewees which has been influential in maximising meaning and interrelatedness (Braun and Clarke, 2008).

### 3.8 Ethics

Conduct in the project has been clear and informative, especially in ensuring participants had knowledge of the study and the ability to consent freely. In order to overcome concerns of data protection, storage of hard copy data (transcriptions) and computerised data have been stored on password-protected computer and in conjunction with locked storage facility at the University of Huddersfield in accordance to ethics approval. Access only extended to project supervisors. The use of Skype for the interview process has also presented some ethical concerns, with data security and identity problematic (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014). Making the interviewee aware of the use of a Dictaphone and confirming they consented to the study was important in establishing trust. Skype has been particularly helpful in relation to ethics of choice, as Deakin and Wakefield's (2014) research identify that Skype can help avoid obtaining mobile numbers from participants, and crucially interviewees can withdraw at the click of a button.

Interviewees were not been offered the option of anonymity due to high profile of the interviewees as it is unlikely their identity can be concealed (Richardson, 2013; Darbi and Hall, 2014). Darbi and Hall (2014) argue that unlike interviews on regular citizens, elite interviews come with peculiar ethical issues. Richardson (2013) also highlights an issue with quoting respondents, indicating caution given the high profile of interviewees. As a result, complete transcriptions of all recordings were conducted to ensure precision in quoting elites, and to help contextualise statements accurately.

#### 4. Analysis and discussion

The Scottish Government's (2013) White Paper on Independence articulates stronger cooperation with the Nordic Council and Arctic region as part of a wide external relations strategy. Although not officially the work of the SNP or wider independence movement, it provides a significant scope for which the independence movement articulated certain ambitions in the event of independence. As the review of literature suggests, a narrative of a Nordic leaning Scottish identity versus a contented British identity is likely. Nordic references have long rooted history in Scottish nationalism, but with no clear objectives on how this relationship is to be realised, this thesis believes that exploring these links through the scope of unionism helps to assess Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone (2013) view that Scotland could seek union with Norden for societal and political shelter.

The following structure of analysis articulates themes amongst six independent supporting groups and elites on Scotland's relationship to their current union and Norden. The first section articulates elite perceptions of UK identities and the current union. The second focuses on how elites consider Scotland's role in Norden, and Nordic identity. Thirdly, the analysis focuses on the type of union desired and how Norden and rUK fit collectively on the agenda of the independence movement.



## 4.1 Scottish Unionism

### *How do Independence-supporting elites interpret UK unionisms?*

The literature review unearthed a Scottish independence movement clear about its desires to establish a new politics based on a consensual political framework and the rejuvenation of social democracy. The decline of the UK's unionisms is instructive, as the mixture of devolved welfare and a unitary Westminster system has meant that Scotland's links to the UK continue to recede (McEwan, 2002; Tierney, 2007). This chapter seeks to explore how elites of the independence movement articulate UK identity and the current union. In doing so, several results emerge. The first is that English and British identities are synonymous and representative of a tribal and unitary system. Secondly, articulations of the breakup of the model are a result of the importance of welfare to Scottish unionism and the inability for the UK state to adopt a federal model of government. Although similarities exist, retaining the monarchy and retaining monetary union are not as important to participants as common culture and history.

#### 4.1.1 Scottish Social Democracy

Distinctions with the UK state generally stem from a perception of inequality and aspiration on areas such as welfare and consensus democracy (Arter, 2005; Havery and Keating, 2014). Inequalities of the UK are particularly prominent in discussions with actors in the movement, with the rejection of austerity politics and the economic values particularly relevant to their individual lack of faith in the union. This section discusses themes related to differentiation with rUK on social democracy and argues that the decline of UK's welfare union has exacerbated this distinction.

What is most notable is a political distinction of economic success between Westminster and Holyrood. It is drawn by Patrick Harvey (2015, Interview Data), Robin McAlpine (2013; 2015, Interview Data) and Lesley Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) that Westminster's understanding of economic success is understood through financial rather than social outcomes. The idea that Scotland needs a different political approach to its conditions appears across the spectrum of the movement and leads to assertions that success in economic terms differs between Westminster and Scotland. Cat Boyd (2014b) invokes Jimmy Reid's statement that 'the untapped potential of our North Sea oil is nothing in comparison to the untapped potential of our people'. Their issues with the British state revolve primarily around the political solutions to burgeoning inequalities. Patrick Harvey (2015) also represents this view...

'It's a different set of aspirations, it's connected for the type of people whom the success of economy is not measured by how rich electorate are, how many millionaires there are. You know a lot of people would look at the success of the UK economy in very narrow terms and some people have that view in Scotland, who think you know making the oil and gas industry rich is itself a good thing.' (Harvey, P., 2015, Interview Data)

It suggests that although social democratic values are not homogenous across Scottish political spectrum, in general views contrast heavily with Westminster.

This too extends to notions that Scottish identity is social democratic. MacDonald (2015, Interview Data) converts electoral success of the SNP as proof of this, and supported by the SNP's self-definition (SNP, 2016). Whilst Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) asserts that Scottish politics is *more* social democratic, he reflects it as a desire of Scottish citizens, rather than Scots being inherently progressive.

I think there's a lot of smugness about Scottish identity now, particularly after the referendum. People think that we are very progressive, and so in parts, my sense of Scottishness is about umm... Feeling like that is slightly imposed upon me and I fear that I am inherently more progressive because of my nationality. (Scothorne, 2015, Interview Data)

Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) also adds that creating a civic British or English identity is difficult despite rejuvenations by Owen Jones and Billy Bragg of English traditions such as the chartists, were not rooted in an English identity. Patrick Harvey MSP (2015) notes caution, however, in suggesting that Scottish identity is more social democratic arguing that there are so many distinct political traditions. Harvey (2015, Interview Data) points to support amongst SNP and Labour politicians who support the free-market approach to public investment. Juxtaposing Scottish and English identities have exacerbated this, and thus narratives are established by elites are not always grounded in reality.

Suspicion over the ideological standpoint of the SNP is highlighted by Cat Boyd (2014), whose particular concern is that a no vote may lead to the devolution of austerity to Holyrood. Boyd (2014, p.8) argues that the yes movement was 'powdered by class politics'. Scothorne (2015) also argues that class differences are displayed through Nordic references, there exists particularly a middle class utopian understanding of Norden, and a class that believes mostly in opposing austerity and forming more internationalised links with groups such as Syriza in Greece (Scothorne, 2015, Interview Data; Harvey, 2015, Interview Data). Social justice binds all movements and their rejection of the UK.

For many interviewed, as long as the Conservative party rules Westminster, independence remains for some the only alternative to social injustice. Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) portrays problems with the British state as obvious, 'it's kind of unequal, it's, it's oppressive, it's very very hostile to transformation'. This hostility to change appears in the works of both Bogdanor (1999) and Colley (2014), and as this view stretches across the spectrum of groups, it makes independence a more likely reality than a federal system. Westminster's failures to reform is particularly strong theme, as Angus MacDonald (2015, Interview Data) asserts that proportional representation is a desire, but unfortunately to him it will not be attained because the current UK electoral system still favours the two main parties.

Additionally, the Scottish Parliament as a consensual institution is contested alike the literature review. MacDonald (2015, Interview Data) and Harvey (2015, Interview Data) for example have regrets that 'unfortunately the British yaboo style of politics stayed to a degree'. Whilst it is an improvement on Westminster, Harvey argues that this is an area for cooperation in the UK, suggesting that...

'In some ways Westminster has looked at what Holyrood and the Welsh Assembly have done and tried to learn from that and improve upon its own performance. Things like elected committee chairs and that type of thing. I think Scotland tries to do things a little bit differently... we sometimes tell ourselves a story about that, that's a little bit bolder than the truth. (P Harvey, interview data, 2015)

Voting does seem to be a theme amongst participants as proof of Scottish difference. MacDonald (2015, Interview Data) is keen to assert that 'the SNP is a social democratic party and given that we kind of been very successful recently then Scotland is definitely a social democratic country.'

Scothorne believes, however, that little operating powers at Holyrood level lead to positive and inclusive rhetoric concerning migration, juxtaposing itself with Westminster. This indicates that secessionist use of civic identity is an established juxtaposition against Westminster that is. Humza Yousaf MSP (2014, p.10) refutes this somewhat by arguing that Scotland has different attitudes towards immigration and asylum. Suggesting that whilst the main parties kowtow to a UKIP led agenda that the hysteria toward Bulgaria and Romania was contrast to the 'inclusive and humane' policies by the Scottish government on immigration. Harvey (2015, Interview Data) too cites political differences on the issue of immigration that separate England and Scotland. Harvey (2015, Interview Data) portrays a British identity aligned with a 'fortress island mentality' that lacks empathy with the struggle of refugees and migration, compared to a Scottish approach, built on historical notions of Scottish migration patterns. In contrast to Scothorne's

(2015) point that it is a tool of differentiation, it seems there is a societal aspect to Scottish migration narratives at odds with Westminster's approach.

On British and Scottish identities, you can invariably see the tensions in the literature. Many contest that English and British identities commonly converge, but distinctions with rUK are predominantly focused on the issue of voting patterns, Riddoch (2015, Interview Data), Scothorne (2015, Interview Data), Boyd (2015, Interview Data), MacDonald (2015, Interview Data) use different voting patterns to set apart Scotland from England, often seen on the whole less attached to social justice. It emphasises the importance of ideas of social justice and the protection of crucial services to the Scottish electorate and Scottish identity. The second element is that English voters are more moderate, in that they are rather content with preserving the functions of the state, only Cat Boyd (2015) really identifies with the working communities in England, others tend to stress the lack of a civic English identity.

Radical independence's (Boyd, 2014; Boyd, 2015, Interview Data) rejection of SNP's low corporation tax proposals also highlight both Boyd and Scothorne's (2015, Interview Data) rejection of a consensual third way social democratic framework. Radical Independence (Foley and Ramand, 2014) largely unites against this agenda, seeking socialism as the only way to achieve high levels of equality. Achieving those conditions is not radical or extensive enough to combat Scottish inequalities, and in some respects, it is rooted in something worse, a capricious nationalism that underpins Nordic social democracy. Scothorne's (2015, Interview Data) position shows an extremely articulate understanding of Norden highlighted to literature concerning welfare chauvinism, reflecting further Anderson and Hilson's (2009) belief that consensus is a national story binding Norden as a continual identity on the basis of its social model. The dangers of this are attributed to the SNP's style of independence, and its position as de facto movement status according to Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) can mean two things. both asserts Nordic symbolism to the SNP's image of independence, but the extent to which the SNP can deliver social transformations is fundamentally questioned, in some ways it invokes the same problem as Estonia, that use of Norden is banal rather than factual.

Boyd (2015, Interview Data) argues that the majority of independence actors are from the left wing, progressive, and social democratic backgrounds (2013) and all committed to social change. She attributes this mainly to a Thatcherite understanding of economic success, and the vulnerability of working class resulting from that type of economy. It is a theme shared amongst many, from Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) to McAlpine (2015, Interview Data), this is the common reason for a more radical Scottish political culture, a defence of the post-war consensus. It also serves as a root of Nordic rhetoric, although Boyd

(2015, Interview Data) does not share the SNP's or any Nordic affinity, the 1980's as a point of departure of any UK style social democracy confirms Hassan's (2013) verdict that Thatcherism is a turning point in Scottish political history. Radical independence's (Boyd, 2015, Interview Data; Foley and Ramand, 2014) use of the Iraq war and interventionist policies of Westminster also highlight huge discrepancies in external relations policies. It continually frames Westminster as imperial and that Scots wish to move beyond this history.

#### 4.1.2 Security and foreign policy

Security is a source of contention that highlights questions over the union, for example, the role of NATO is more than problematic for some and signifies the alignment of Westminster with an interventionist role. For Scothorne 'NATO is an imperialist alliance with absolute hideous reputation and record on the world stage.' NATO is a conflicted issue amongst the movement, some interviewees displayed dissatisfaction with the SNP's position of retaining membership. Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) argues that 'the SNP thought, they used the fact that there were Nordic countries in NATO big time in the debate here to persuade their own party to back it, but in the end it only passed by a couple of votes and they lost two MSPs over it.'

This does not change what many elites want is a peaceful Scottish role in international arena, and some like Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) and Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) reject any ideas that Scotland should have a role. A different approach to issues of foreign policy can be observed, where foreign intervention is particularly important for the more radical actors, but foreign policy has become a defining issue for the SNP in recent times (Robertson, 2014).

Beyond current security dynamics, issues with the union extend to role of the empire. Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) argues that Britain has 'been an historical force of bad in the world', but to him, Scotland is very guilty of this too, arguing 'Scotland's part of that absolutely'. It suggests that aside from the SNP, there is considerable acceptance of Scotland's role in the empire (Mycock, 2012). Whilst SNP material suggests a re-evaluation, its scant association with the Commonwealth further proves Mycock's claim. Humza Yousaf (2014, p.10) states that cultural events at the Glasgow hosted Commonwealth Games used this point to acknowledge slavery as part of Scottish history, and shows his desire to move to a commonwealth of equals. A different approach to the Commonwealth was significant for Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) and Harvey (2015, Interview Data), advancing that the commonwealth should be

a place where Scotland could be a transformative voice “I would want to Scotland to be a voice for transformative, new international institutions.” (Harvey, 2015). It represents a distinctive approach to foreign policy that is not to the exclusion of British identity, but the opportunity for many Scottish groups to reconnect with the world through a very different approach. It also suggests that historical ties to the British state are accepted, but not as reasons for the union’s continuation. Angus Macdonald (2015, Interview Data) and Harvey (2015, Interview Data) linked the issue of Commonwealth to the monarchy and retaining that, it identifies that perhaps amongst elites in government, Scotland is grounded in the identity of Britain in these frames, even though they ultimately want to see an end to this practice. Perhaps even the union of crowns is up for discussion if it were not publically popular in the long-term. It shows a constraint in the movement to portray a radical alternative, meaning that union’s post-independence are framed constantly in the context of cultural union with the UK as a means of inclusivity.

In relation to empire, Harvey (2015, Interview Data) echoes Colley (2014) and Devine (2012) in a sense that the island nation of the UK is reciprocated through Scotland’s and England’s perceptions on immigration. His statements entail that arguing that Scotland perception is more a bridge, where Scotland suffered population loss and as a result gained an appreciation of international workers coming to Scotland, whereas England and Westminster tend to see immigration through the prism of an island fortress. From this, two drastically different ideas on empire in particular can be obtained. Scotland’s secessionist movement does not reject the role empire in Scotland history and contemporary identity, but a determination to see things differently through cooperation in Malawi and other places hints that many Scots see this as bridge building and righting the wrongs of the past. It suggests also a construction of a contemporary English empire identity as a projection of power and a continual presence on the world stage. Further acknowledgement of this is McAlpine’s (2015, Interview Data) statement that England will be the final nation under colony of the British Empire.

#### 4.1.3 Societal union

Societal unionism is an integral feature of the SNP's official position on UK relations in the event of independence. Retaining the common travel area 'is part of the broader social union that is the expression of the close economic, social and cultural ties across the nations of these islands (The Scottish Government, 2013).' By extension, the SNP commits to retaining a societal union with rUK. This is supported by MacDonald's (2015, Interview Data) view is that the UK will gain a 'good friend', an admission that strong cultural ties are inevitable. The major difference of an independent Scotland with England would ultimately be a political one, an alternative approach to ideas of public spending and democratic process. Cultural links are also political, in that it is possible to attribute Scots rejection of austerity measures as protecting traditional institutions such as the NHS and Royal Mail as well as the monarchy (McEwan, 2010; Norman, 2010). These social features are also cultural elements of Scotland's union with rUK and its survival is a priority for many in the movement mean that Scottish independence is also a mirroring of UK identity.

Societal links have further evolved to encompass suggestions that independence would lead to a '21<sup>st</sup> Century partnership of the Isles' (Salmond, 2006). The Nordic countries are played here as a comparative union, a style of union that is sought for in the UK. 'Norway, Iceland, Denmark and Sweden have been in union with one another for much of their modern history. Like Scotland, England and Ireland, they have close ties of language, trade, family and friendship' (Salmond, 2006). In this sense, Salmond invokes Norden in respect of their version of union, built on close societal ties, and a theme consistent in SNP literature (Newby, 2009; Salmond, 2006; Robertson, 2014). Whilst to some extent it is a result of majority to support for retaining the union, its consistency draws on the fact that many elites believe union with rUK, and to a greater extent Ireland, would form the Scottish Government's post-independence agenda. Norden here stands for a 'beacon of achievement, good government and cooperation'. The prominence of partnership with other countries of the British Isles after independence is portrayed in the White Paper (2013) and Angus Robertson's (2014) speech'. It is not to the detriment of a regional role with Nordic countries and European Union membership, a point further accentuated by MacDonald (2015, Interview Data) in his interview, where he sees no qualms in embracing Nordic membership with UK. Emphasis by Robertson (2014) is again on the historic, economic and social ties with UK, which hold great value 'on the basis of equality'. A partnership of the isles through the British-Irish council framework, is a chance for

Scotland to act as an equal partner, perhaps it's this is the most telling point, Scotland still identifies itself as culturally British, but the cooperative relationship is hindered by unitary system.

Independence would necessitate eradication of a political union with rUK, as some expect that the Labour and Conservative parties would still function in similar but increased autonomous fashion. Scotland's debate as Riddoch (2015) argues is different to the UK's on issues of society and immigration, which emphasises political differences. English and British identities are often conflated. Thus, the ability for English elites to create a palatable civic identity causes much of this distinction, and its rejection of British identity is a driver for allies of similar political beliefs. This is especially emphasis by both Scothorne (2015) and McAlpine (2015), who argue that trouble in creating a civic British identity has meant that English identity contains the very negative symbols attached to Britishness such as a brutal empire. McAlpine (2015) suggests that England is the last colonised nation of the British Empire, thus confirming Kidd (2010) and Mycock's (2012) view of Scottish nationalist narratives of English colonisation of the Isles. The question of what happens to England is as poignant as Westminster's approach to Scotland.

'An independent Scotland, with a commitment to social justice, can be a beacon for progress elsewhere on these Isles' (The Scottish Government, 201). This kind of cooperation, on social justice lines reflects aspects of Radical Independence and National Collective's Rory Scothorne (2015, Interview Data), who argue that a deeper sense of social solidarity is required across the union. Patrick Harvey (2015) and Lesley Riddoch (2015) also identify that cultural and historical links are particularly important, but just because they share these, does not mean they need a union to do so, with Harvey suggesting that there will always be more that unites them. This is also consistent with a narrative within the SNP (Robertson, 2014; Salmond, 2012), confirmed by MacDonald (2015) arguing that Scotland should cooperate through the British-Irish Council framework if independent, having the same type of relationship that the Nordic Council has. These relations propose an Isles framework rather than solely Westminster, and thus increasingly situate Scotland as equal partners of England in the British-Irish Council framework (The Scottish Government, 2013).

Alternatively, rather than independence, some political actors could believe in a federal UK system, though they argue that Westminster's reluctance to decentralise is an issue of concern. Scothorne (2015) advocates a federal union as an ideal settlement that could aid social justice, and Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) too supports this idea. Angus MacDonald (2015, Interview Data) supports a federal system where everything is devolved except for macroeconomics and defence. Along with McAlpine (2015), they feel this needs to be well thought through and shift from being a winner takes all type of system. Riddoch



(2015, Interview Data) arguing further that this is a particularly 'British' characteristic. It substantiates the view of Bogdanor (1999) and Colley (2014) in that the reform is becoming increasingly unlikely due to the nature of the uncodified constitution, as well as conferring to Arter (2005) and Cairney's (2011) perception that Scottish elites had started brightly in trying to reinvigorate democracy. Elements of renewal are desired, yet questions over Westminster's desire to change course is integral to the union's decline.

Overall, this chapter asserts that elites do favour societal links in particular, but rather a result of so much shared history than an endorsement by all secessionists. While some such as Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) believe that a reformed UK would best achieve social outcomes, the overt lack of sympathy for issues of consensual democracy, welfare positions, and social justice form part of the narrative that gives elites unease over remaining in the UK. Until Westminster is considered less centralised, and the merit of social provisions re-emerges as a centrally binding UK value, it is likely to result in continual deterioration.

## 4.2 Scottish Norden

### *How do independence-supporting elites interpret Nordic unionisms?*

Scottish elites firstly identify health, wellbeing and social justice as the primary identity of the Nordic countries, and in doing so, indicates that their view of Norden is largely pivots on the traditional conception of the Nordic model rather than elements of security and cooperation. Some envisage eventually having something alike a Scottish version of the model, which is does not contradict Anderson's (2009) view that distinct variations of the model are articulated with a national emphasis. The SNP and SGP do assume a more active role in Nordic cooperation, and in general, most actors argue that closer cooperation is not a bad thing. These two parties also seek a more defined role on issues such as Arctic, environment or energy issues, suggesting that the use of Norden in Scotland is considerably broad featuring many of the components of Nordic cooperation. The work of Nordic Horizons cannot be understated, by allowing an academic and elite focus on broader Nordic issues, they complement a wide range of Nordic factors. These have embedded softer issues of Norden such as cycling, Arctic, and outdoor lifestyle on Scottish Nordic reflections.

Nordic comparisons seem somewhat forced, its use by Angus MacDonald (2015, Interview Data) is particularly important as it displays a very core Nordic SNP voice. But one the only what that seeks to explicitly define as Nordic, whereas its aspirational use by other groups gives the indication that Scotland is not Nordic, but becoming Nordic merges previous Scottish histories along with its perceived political position on the left. The historical and attempt by scholars to research this phenomena indicates that Scottish Norden is lodged in Scotland's past, but the past wasn't Nordic, rather the future they could have had if it weren't for England was Nordic (Hilson and Newby, 2016).

Despite such wide appraisal of Norden, some actors such as Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) reflect concern over the extent that a Nordic model can solve the issues Scotland faces, and the extent that the Nordic model would continue into the future. Particularly prominent to this discussion is whether the Nordic model is the zenith of Scottish political aspiration, it seems grounded in a reality that Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) calls the low hanging fruit, but its longevity is based on what on a capricious national sentiment (Scothorne, 2015, Interview Data). Ultimately, Norden remains elite led, Harvey (2015, Interview Data) and McAlpine (2015, Interview Data) both admit that this is not felt by the public, but concerns over health and welfare and democracy do resonate as issues. Whilst their understanding of

Norden goes beyond the banal, the social democratic understanding of Norden as a collective of small independent social democracies is more pronounced.

#### 4.2.1 Nordic Model of social democracy

Scholars such as Arter (2005) and Harvey (2015) suggest Scotland's political elite were particularly interested in establishing a Nordic style social democracy, emphasised by a more egalitarian approach and forming structures similar to the Nordic parliaments. This theme has been particularly emphasised in the interview process, where a desire to learn from the region on issues of welfare and health are particularly prevalent.

The relationship between economic success and welfare has caused some independence supporters to admire the Nordic model of social investment as opposed to the Anglo-American free-market model (Small, 2013). Universal public services, redistributive tax and welfare systems (Small, 2013; McAlpine, 2015) have been the basis for some of the SNP's key policy areas on education and welfare, and particular focus for Common Weal's vision of Scotland. Norden to these groups is not just aspirational, but 'low-hanging' fruit (Riddoch, 2015). Riddoch (2015) warns that although achieving it is very difficult, models such as strengthened local democracy could be implemented immediately. In respect of elite's use of British identity, Harvey exclaims that what draws most elites to the Nordic model is that...

'It's more there are aspects of the Nordic experience, or elements or the approaches of some of the Nordic countries which seem to many of us as the right response to where we are at the moment in Scotland' (Harvey, 2015, Interview data).

Like Harvey, Riddoch (2015) also suggests that this is a response to growing inequality and poor health conditions, pushing the movement to seek models that address them.

Angus MacDonald's position on being accepted members of the Nordic community are based on a similar social democratic viewpoint, arguing that Norden 'could possibly have some objections but I think the majority would welcome a similar viewpoint from across the North Sea'. This indicates quite a common view across the movement that highlight social democratic culture most when asking about the major elements of Nordic identity. Alyn Smith MEP (2008) of the SNP also suggests that Scotland has much to gain from Nordic region in terms socially, economically and culturally, but it should not stop them forming other international links and looking at other ideas across Europe. He does suggest though that Scotland

shares more politically in common than with the UK, citing response to terror and detention laws being part of that discourse, and calls these policies 'offensive to both Scottish and Nordic values (Smith, 2008).

There is a more general sense that citizens are happier and have better wellbeing in the Nordic countries. These are often aligned with the social democratic policies that accompany them. A feeling exerted by MacDonald (2015, Interview Data), McAlpine (2015, Interview Data) and Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) who emphasise the collaboration and wellbeing that stems from the Nordic cooperation and social democracy. They see this in cultural terms that the citizens of the region are more inclined and act in very social democratic way. 'Nordic identity [is], well, having a social democratic outlook on life' proclaims MacDonald (2015). All these themes are consistent with the idea that social democracy should be the political norm in Scotland, and attached Nordic references to political and voting values of the Scottish electorate. All parties consider voting patterns indicative of a social democratic political culture, but only the SNP see this in cultural terms.

MacAlpine's (2015, Interview Data) juxtapositions of British and Nordic identities are clear, he references an inability for Westminster to look at Norden out of shame, because doing so makes you 'pretty disappointed with your own performance'. The high wage, high tax economy is underpinned by a mutualism, an absence of conflict between trade unions and employees that means Nordic citizens are able to live healthy and secure lives. Developments in welfare across Norden are transnational, based on comparison and exchange (Hilson and Newby (2015). Many of the groups aspire to this, especially the SNP, Scottish Green Party and Nordic Horizons. The Nordic states topping every league table is a sign that they do things right, a similarity in Riddoch's (2012; 2015) arguments as proof that Scotland's look to Norden is justifiable, but doesn't necessarily make assertions that Scotland is Nordic, rather it is a practical ambition. This view is rejected, however, by Scothorne (2015) who believes that Nordic model is a utopia, suggesting that it is 'something that is constructed, by um, progressive intellectuals that in the British media and some in the Scottish kind of commentariat.' (Scothorne, 2015). Developments in welfare across Norden are transnational, based on comparison and exchange (Hilson and Newby (2015). Many of the groups aspire to this, especially the SNP, Scottish Green Party and Nordic Horizons.

Scothorne further observes that Norden is fact a class driven deliberation. A factor seen by the split amongst each group concerning the use and understanding of Norden. Radical groups are more likely to see the Norden as a 'utopia' and perhaps not as radical as Scotland needs to be.

‘There’s a section of the sort of Scottish middle classes, and I don’t really like the term middle classes, I mean it’s quite vague, but... in the Scottish public sector, things like that, I mean who are, would kind of be very happy to stick “I pay lots of taxes” kind of role.’ (Scothorne, 2015).

A theme amongst all is a desire to maintain social democratic features, yet these appear bound in social democratic thought of the 1950’s post-war consensus. McAlpine agrees (2015) that these are positioned on old elements of the UK rather than Norden. Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) suggests this too, that Nordic references are particularly keen on the left as answers to the current predicament but when visualising Nordic identity, they really articulating a modern vision of post-war consensus Britain. Stating critically that it ‘provides the life support system for the social democratic dreams of a certain section of the British left’ (Scothorne, 2015). In some elements the kind of utopian thinking Jenny Andersson (2009) applies to Swedes, could reflect the nostalgic patterns of Scots on the welfare state. This is interesting in two senses, it further supports Chatterjee’s (2006) claim that national identities of Benedict Anderson are framed between colonial and imperialist versions, it not to that say that Scotland has been colonised, but rather that naturally in theoretical terms Scotland is framed in such a manner because of identity frameworks. By drawing on platforms so close to Scotland geographically, Scotland no doubt looks like it is for regionalism and identity rather than because they are necessarily the best model to follow.

Gender and equal rights are also brought up by Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) and Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) as issues that make the Nordic region stand out in particular. Whilst Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) does not see the Nordic model as attainable or lasting, gender equality is the best model to learn from. Green activist Dominic Hinde (2013) also argues that Norden should be more than a success story for economics alone, but for advanced gender politics. However, he argues that before these the broader elements can be achieved Scotland needs to embrace political pluralism, for the Nordic welfare states were built on these principles. The lack of progress in Scotland suggests that although Nordic references, and its electorate are very keen to build a Scottish version of Nordic success. The political cultures inherited from Westminster still hold Scotland back, or suggest that the SNP’s pitch is continuing a divergence between Scottish and British culture and political values rather than inheriting them. Softer elements of the Nordic countries are presented by the Green Party’s endeavours to establish larger cycling community, a look to Denmark and on community owned green energy issues is a common endeavour particularly of Alison Johnstone MSP (2012; 2015).

The structural argument is clear too, as a barrier between Scotland attaining a Nordic model as Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) states 'the more time you spend you realise the key attributes are clearly missing, but that is mostly because certain apparatus is missing.' Riddoch (2015) mirrors Hinde's (2013) belief that structurally Scotland is not Nordic, but to achieve goals of democracy and equality, an apparatus in the style of Nordic countries is required. Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) also adds that although historical links exist through geography and Viking histories, the Nordic states are admired because they are the 'smartest, healthiest and most successful nations', and this follows a continual reference to health and prosperity and continual link by both interviewees and other commentators on the importance of social democratic model. In many ways, it expresses the models success, but also its scope. It reinforces ideas in the previous chapter that seek to highlight British understanding of success in economic terms not health terms.

This softer and extensive form of Norden shows a desire that could be reflected as unilateral when learning from Norden, but Riddoch (2013; 2015, Interview Data) argues that soft skills can be learnt by the Nordic states from Scotland too. Engaging in this transnational discourse has an advantage for the nationalist movement, as it does not harm links and goes in conjunction with already established understandings of Norden (Andersson, 2009). Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) also argues that a lack of Nordic understanding of Scottish independence has led to Scottish-Nordic links to appear unilateral. Interviews, however, by Michael Gray (2013) in Iceland reported official political support for Scotland's autonomy. Further claimed by MacDonald (2015, Interview Data), Scotland may be a serious peripheral consideration for Norden. The example of Estonia is a significant lesson for Scottish secessionists. Strang (2016) and Hilson (2010) argue that Norden is unlikely to want to expand given its recent security dynamics. If Scotland, however, as argued by Harvey (2015, Interview Data), MacDonald (2015, Interview Data), and Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) shares geopolitical shared interests, and given Scotland's more general left-leaning independence movement, a formal or informal union is likely with sustained political will.

Riddoch (2012) indicates that there are plenty of similarities and shared strategic interests, both geopolitically and socially. 'Scotland, like Norway, has important oil, gas, hydro and fish reserves. Scotland, like Sweden, has emerged from half a century of solid Labour voting. Parts of Scotland, like Finland, are struggling with a legacy of bad diet; and Scotland, like Denmark, has fully embraced wind and marine energy.' Riddoch (2015) also argues that the language on Norden has changed, from peripheral to mainland Scandinavia, however, Scotland, through the SNP are looking increasingly north. Changes within

Norden mean the SNP are looking toward mainstream and cultural Scandinavia, rather than peripheral Norden membership. Stressing similarities further engenders a shift from political to cultural association. This is limited however to the SNP, as aside from McAlpine, others identify a social culture is closer to rUK, Harvey (2015) states, that they just like to tell a story rather than being totally opposed.

‘Currently Scotland can tick only a couple of these boxes – but that’s precisely why comparison with the nations of the north could be so transformational. If the Nordics are willing to tolerate a limping understudy, the Scottish government could apply for the equivalent of observer status tomorrow.’ (Riddoch, 2015)

Most surprising is that Scottish Norden is not limited to the grit of social democratic politics as has been subject to the literature, in some cases it has very wide remit and ideals. A prominent part of the interviews was also a real desire to create Scandinavian style health and social mobility.

It is clear there is not a consensus on Nordic cooperation. Cooperation may be on the agenda for the political parties, but amongst Radical Independence and National Collective there is a lack of knowledge of Nordic cooperation, in part the split between elite’s and activist population is noticeable. Particularly for Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) and Boyd (2015, Interview Data), with Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) particularly arguing that Norden is utopian. This lack of consensus does not diminish Scotland’s political desire to cooperate with the Nordic countries, but it is not clear whether elite use of Norden translates into public understanding. A significant reason for the retention of British modular and banal signifiers such as monarchy and army in some cases reflects a desire for continuation on different demands. However, alternatively, the Nordic leaning parties, with considerable intergovernmental relations, believe that it aligns successfully with Scottish notions of social democracy.

MacDonald (2015, Interview Data) and Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) in particular do highlight significant cultural connections with the region, further supporting Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone (2013) view that Scotland could engage in societal union with the region. When assessing Scotland’s identity, MacDonald (2015, Interview Data) approaches it in a cultural frame that distinguishes its identity vastly from UK, and in addition suggests the kind of ethnicised element that Ake Daun (1990) shows to Swedes, that certain electorates are naturally more progressive as such.

‘Scottishness is umm... it’s a... well... it’s a state of mind, but more than that, it’s a link to a part of Europe which has social justice at its core, in its DNA, and I think that is overall fact of what

Scottishness is, a sense of fairness and justice amongst the communities that make up the country' (MacDonald, 2015, Interview data).

Angus MacDonald (2015) too suggests that they share a common bond geographically, that their identity is underpinned by Scotland's geography. Harvey (2015, Interview Data) questions in particular whether Britain would ever want to develop those links. The geographical link is certainly utilised, but not only for cultural aspects of belonging. To Harvey (2015, Interview Data) and Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) in particular, the proximity highlights the ability to look at a different and possible response to many of the issues that have undermined the current union. Union with, or being Nordic is not the focus, but an aspiration to McAlpine (2015, Interview Data), Harvey (2015, Interview Data) and Riddoch (2015, Interview Data).

Scottish elites relate mostly to a traditional and popular understanding of Nordic identity, especially the traditional nodes that Lagerspetz (2003) defines. The strong security component of Nordic cooperation identified by Strang (2016) is only evidenced in Scothorne and the SNP to some degree. By positioning themselves in NATO and by articulating difference on security trident issue and by moving to newer Arctic and geopolitical issues, the SNP align themselves with contemporary understandings of Nordic identity. What differs drastically to Estonia's case is that the SNP have built up considerable association and defence of Nordic social democratic model. This association has its routes with the success of Nordic neighbours. All groups look favourably at gender equality and the triumphs of social care, but most concede that Scotland is not naturally egalitarian. In some aspects there is a continuation of the images of UK presented by Marr (1999), in that Scotland's independence movement continues to present itself as an egalitarian left leaning northern European nation, very much contrasted to a comfortable consensus of UK by the Conservative Party, the only difference being that this position adopted heavily by the Labour Party too.

#### 4.2.2 External relations

'Scotland has key shared interests with our geographical neighbours in the North Atlantic, such as Iceland and Norway, and a common interest in the Arctic and High North.' (The Scottish Government, 2013)

Common interests are key for many of the participants, a new regionalism has been formed similar to the indications of Powell (2013), as Riddoch (2015, Interview Data), Harvey (2015, Interview Data), McAlpine



(2015, Interview Data) and SNP (2015, Interview Data) all look to the North Sea and Arctic potential. It looks at the way in particular that Norden has solved issues relating to environment and security potential in the region. The SNP's use is perhaps most clearly defined by the interest of security, but all sides see an economic advantage and scope for such developments. Harvey (2015, Interview Data) argues that 'it would be very much in Scotland's interests to start fostering some of those relationships, intergovernmental relationships quite quickly.' Fostering ties move beyond just social democratic and political values, but shared interests in the region. Harvey (2015, Interview Data), Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) and McAlpine (2015, Interview Data) all suggest that there is great potential beyond oil in the North Sea region, with the Arctic, structural projects and shared climate interests that could be further developed (Harvey, P., 2015, Interview Data).

Scottish understanding of Norden as a collection of peaceful states on the international world is coherent with literature to some extent. Common weal (2014) and the SNP (2014) look at a refreshed foreign policy to distance itself from UK's contemporary and historical global ambitions. They suggest a desire to copy Norway as a middle power peacekeepers and mediators in conflict regions (Common Weal, 2014; MacDonald, 2015). The SNP's line is quite clearly to have a similar role to Norway in regards to being a peaceful broker on the world stage (MacDonald, 2015, Interview Data). However, being an honest broker is not something all respondents shared. Riddoch (2015, Interview Data) and Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) want to see very little activity from Scotland, saying it's too early, and the idea of having a role just replicates UK's overconfidence. Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) in particular is wary of Norway and others membership of NATO.

Compared with nodes of Nordic cooperation such as the Nordic Model, elite response to defence was more illuminating. All interviewees highlighted that elites were not sure how NORDEFECO worked, or did not wish to allude to an already problematic Nordic foreign policy. Scothorne and Riddoch highlight differences in their policies on NATO and European Union membership, but the lack of interest comes from many sources. MacDonald's (2015, Interview Data) view that NORDEFECO is not a pressing issue suggests that either elites don't know much about the extent of changes that Strang (2016) and Forsberg (2010) identify, or it could testify that security elements of Norden are less important than SNP's ambitions to identify with the Nordic states through the frame of social democracy. This is significant proof that Scotland's future connection to Norden is likely a political one, based on, or at least framed on traditional elements of the region such as its universal social investment model.

The changes that Strang (2016) and Forsberg (2010) articulate in reference to Norden's security image are not picked up by most groups, aside from the SNP and lateral north, changes in security dynamic have not been picked up as a requirement of membership. There is a very small and brief approach to align Scottish interests with the Arctic, but this is very similar to the position set out by the current UK government. Not enough focus beside one group leads it to be a very 'particular' interest. NORDEFECO and other elements appear less understood by the groups in question either, as most of the deliberation on Norden stems from the Nordic model, either that Scotland uses older tags of a region in transition, or is not intent on specific cooperation or union with Norden. Their priority seems to be to take policies and ideas as proof that a higher level of social equality is possible.

Norden is an elite phenomena as Harvey (2015, Interview Data) and McAlpine (2015, Interview Data) admit, however, this is not to say it is problematic. The success of this approach can be measured in a poll indicating SNP members (YouGov, 2014) felt more Norwegian than British, it means that the soft elements of Nordic values have a basis in Scottish independence supporters, the formalities have no real practical benefit, but like Harvey, Scothorne (2015) points out, cooperation can only be a good thing. McAlpine (2015, Interview Data) and Harvey (2015, Interview Data) disagree with Newby's (2009) suggestion that Scottish public are not connected to the Nordic debate. They argue that whilst political parties and groups have been instrumental, ideas behind Nordic social democracy such as egalitarianism and universalism are grounded in the values of the Scottish electorate (Danson, McAlpine, Spicker, & Sullivan, 2012). Linked to voting records and perception of a social democratic Scottish political culture, there is a clear narrative. Neither is Scotland's Norden necessarily superficial, it often points towards highly successful discourse, as it allows opportunity to extend Scotland's relation to Norden without the commitment of direct union. 'Cousins divided' seems to be conscious amongst SNP supporters, this soft juxtaposition has led to the idea that Scotland rest between two, it is more social democratic, and saving institutions of social-justice, it seeks to establish a common political defence of the system (Hilson and Newby, 2015). Despite a moderation on the SNP's position on Anglo/Scottish relations, it means that ties with Norden will inevitably be secondary until the electorate align their social-justice ideals with a sense of cultural Norden. The Nordic model of social democracy is something they can engage more on, but at the minute, it is Scottish links to Westminster that trap Scottish ambitions to develop social justice in the radical manner its independence movement seeks.

### 4.3 From Union to Union?

*Is elite use of Norden a rejection of the UK's unionisms, a desire to be Nordic, or desire for a reconstructed Isles framework?*

Developments in welfare across Norden are transitional in character, based on comparison and exchange (Hilson and Newby (2015)). Many of the groups aspire to this, especially Nordic Horizons and the Green Party's approach acts to forge fresh and productive relationships around the globe.

Scotland's Future (The Scottish Government, 2013) document captures the general restraint of these groups when considering external relations and continuing relations with the UK in reference to independence. It suggests like the previous chapters, that Scotland is not firmly in favour of one or the other, that the document is a dualist approach reflecting a dual tension that Scotland is not wholly different from UK identities but desires to increase its difference from UK in political sense. Additionally, political ambition for Scotland to become Nordic is not restricted to membership of its Council, it is a formality that confirms its Nordicness. As Curry-Jansen (2011) asserts, Estonia can brand itself as Nordic but it would require Council membership to formalise it. The proposal to join the council in the first place, positions Scotland on the Nordic periphery and tags onto, as Burch (2010) instructs, a region famed for its progressiveness and its Viking and egalitarian histories.

Aside from the production of renewables and oil investment in the Nordic countries, and formal membership of the Council, *Scotland's Future* expresses no explicit links to Nordic policies. The lack of articulation in Nordic cooperation suggests that there is a deeper issue of relevance, at least to the public. Riddoch's (2015) articulation that the electorate at least hope that their politicians are more consensual is reflective of elements of Scottish politics, that electorate desire are more akin to Nordic politics but that they are not necessarily marketed or seen as making Scotland Nordic, rather they are solutions to a number of problems, as Harvey (2015) suggests. Alternatively, the lack of explicit Nordic features maintains that the strongest external relations remain with the UK, akin to Bailes et al.'s (2013) security remit. As Bailes et al., (2013) suggest, the two unions would differ, political and social union. MacDonald's view that Scotland could be a member of both a reformed union with rUK and Nordic Council suggests that it would like a social union with rUK, and a political union with Norden.

This suggests that groups in favour of Scottish autonomy seek a relationship with England on different terms that allows them an external relations foundation and the ability to move away from an Anglo-American model of economics. The independence elites do reject the traditional union state, in favour of

a less formal, intergovernmental union amongst the isles is a particularly likely option. Interview data suggests that at minimum, a federal system would suffice, but there are questions whether the role of England would counter aims to create a progressive and fair society in Scotland. Nordic cooperation is still seen by all but the SNP and Green party, as a social democratic venture rather than the pursuit of extensive geopolitical role. It implies that only traditional markers have any real effect on the Scottish public and when scoring political points. Nordic cooperation has converged on similar ideas that the SNP and Conservative Party have on issues such as Europe and a limited view of Norden is desirable. Aspects of Norway's oil fund and Scandinavian social democracy are increasingly important when juxtaposing Westminster's political culture (Newby, 2009; The Scottish Government, 2013). The SNP and SGP make specific reference to contemporary understandings of Nordic cooperation such as NATO membership, but their advocacy of the region lacks a formalised approach, partly due to the continuing union with rUK, meaning that membership of the region's organisational bodies is at a premature state.

MacDonald (2015, Interview Data) asserts, like the Scotland's Future document that 'there would be a Council of the British Isles where, like the Nordic Council', he adds that 'even the republic of Ireland could be part of that if it wanted'. In addition, MacDonald emphasises that Anglo-Scottish relations would be friendly in the event of independence and framed around a model similar to Norden where Sweden and Norway continue to get along. It suggests as Bratberg and Brandal (2015) argue, that Norway is a useful case study for the independence movement, but particularly for the SNP. The SNP's willingness to establish a Nordic style British union framework means that Norden operates on two distinct narratives. Firstly, it acts as a base for realising preferential and independent relationship with rUK, whilst not damaging its social union. Secondly, it establishes a *realpolitik* that links the practicalities of the Nordic model with the ambition of Scottish independence. By displaying a route to Norden membership, Scotland can draw gradually on the features of Nordic identity in a particularly 'Scottish' fashion.

The most desired cooperative element is the transnational, collaborative dimension that union in the shape of Norden produces. This intergovernmental, less partisan approach accommodates much of the Scottish autonomy movements' demands, and crucially does not pit one union against another, in fact, as Burch (2010) suggests, the Nordic tag only strengthens Scottish identity. The same social union with rUK may do just the same, enabling Scotland to pursue a privileged although distinctive position in World affairs.

So I would like to hope, whether we are independent or not, we can add, hopefully a chorus of voices saying, actually European Union can be a progressive project again (P., Harvey, 2015, Interview Data)

Harvey (2015, Interview Data), Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) and McAlpine's (2015, Interview Data) desire to form links goes beyond the described Nordic dream, looking at Germany, social solidarity with Greece as a desire to cooperate with electorate of similar political causes. In many ways, this shows that the SNP's nationalism is modular, in accordance with Chatterjee, but the wider movement is seeking an alternative less modular construction of Scottish identity, putting questions over a formalised Nordic relationship.

'And I'd be keen to Scotland as umm... if not a full member of the Nordic council which may be possible, but certainly an associate member, or... at the moment we are an observer, so we do send electorate along to the Nordic council when it meets.' (MacDonald, 2015, Interview data)

Although the Baltic countries only occupy observer status, MacDonald sees proof of a path to Nordic cooperation. It confirms that some Scottish elites would like to form a political union with Norden, whether they share cultural elements of the union is for contestation.

Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone (2013) report on Scotland's independence options shows the struggle of the independence movement to articulate its preference regarding union options and this is displayed also through the interview process. It confirms that the likely ties connecting Scotland to Norden would be political and societal, and likewise UK relations would be economic and societal. Trapped between two histories, the SNP struggles to deny that Scotland shares so much historically, politically and culturally with the rest of the UK, however, their Nordic outlook is also steeped in such a fashion. Like Bratberg and Brandal (2015) points out stems from a vision of cousins divided, Norden not only appear as the antithesis of all the negatives of Westminster but also signifies the political secessionist hope. Scotland's Nordicity is primarily political, a cause of tension and dismay at the economic and political union with rUK. Scottish Norden is ironically centred on British culture, as reflections tend to model a time before Thatcher, where the welfare system was integral to a common UK identity (Devine, 2012).

The suggestion by MacDonald (2015) that having a social democratic mind-set is a requirement of Nordic identity confers with Lagerspetz (2003) model of Nordic cooperation and the inability to produce such a model undermined Estonia's attempts. Additionally, the SNP's more pressing line on Arctic and defence matter such as retaining NATO membership suggest that their perception of Norden is wide but these

some aspects are difficult to promote to the electorate. When selling Nordic cooperation it done so through the lens of social democracy and their values systems.

Ultimately, Scotland's new civic identity is problematic as it continually draws from historical links, disrupting Scotland's ability to produce a fresh identity. Norden is a powerful marker in Scottish independence narratives due to the success of Norden as a community of small nations and the geographical and historical links to Scotland. The position of these two union's creates either an identity problem or an adoption of Keating's more post-sovereign perceptions of identity. It also reinforces the point Chatterjee (1999) makes, that history binds them to their choice, that the symbols and the imagination of the nation is limited. An independent Scotland is free to make relations with the Norden, but this imagined history is not a refreshed debate on external relations but built upon already colonised versions of Scottish identity.

## 5. Conclusion

This thesis asked how political actors supportive of independence articulate Scottish identity and Scotland's relationship to rUK. Scottish identity is framed by all groups as *more* social democratic than England, a point often supported by Scots voting records, however, significant distress noted by Scothorne (2015, Interview Data) indicates this identity is often imposed. It indicates that the independence elite desire further political development and sometimes more radical policy actions rather than a progressive identity.

Another crucial element is Scotland's relationship to the rUK, where many Scots see the decay of the democratic system, lack of reformism and most crucially the decline of public services as the main reasons for leaving the union. The movement's defence of welfare and other features of the state reinforce distinction with Westminster, but ultimately argue the protection of UK institutions such as Royal Mail, NHS. In this sense, elites look back to an image of 1950's consensus Britain when re-imagining a future Scotland. Societally and politically, many Scots do not differ tremendously much from their English counterparts, as Harvey (2015, Interview Data) suggests, there is a lot more in common than nationalists like to think. This particularly confirms Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone (2013) point that union with rUK would be maintained, despite independence.

Secondly, Nordic cooperation reinforces ideas of Scottish social democracy, an alignment of progressives across the north that Scotland wants to share an identity. It confirms Burch's idea that Nordic's are an add-on, many of the commentators add that Nordic cooperation would be a nice thing and is relatively harmless venture. This particular point emphasises continual reflections that the Nordic countries are peaceful World actors. The pragmatic side of Nordic cooperation is, however, underdeveloped.

Strang's (2016) security union understanding of Norden means that only the SNP really engage with Arctic and NATO issues, whereas the wider movement have some issues with NATO membership in particular. The harder powers of the region and their flexibility either amount to lead not to less critical understanding, but just lack of understanding in general of Nordic security remit as a source of unionism. Any Nordic unionism from Scotland would likely come from a popular sense of progressive social democracy. It suggests that softer Nordic symbols such as health and welfare play an integral role in framing new relationships, with the SNP willing to engage with a wider remit. With limited public opinion and the reality that security issues are already covered by union with rUK, and as Bailes et al. (2013) point out, could remain that way even with Nordic collaboration.

Thirdly, Scotland would want to leave one 'type' of union, in order to preferably join the Nordic style of union, rather than loosen ties altogether with rUK. This is not a popular case across the board where some would prefer a federal union; however, the Westminster's ability to change is questioned deeming federal option to be less likely than autonomy. Scottish elite use of Norden is connected to the past, a time before union with the UK. Norden offers a consistent model of what is possible for aspirations of equality, a continuing and long running dream for Scotland's separationists. Like Estonia and Latvia (Mosio, 2009; Lagerspetz, 2003) Scotland looks to its past when it defines its future external relations, looking to a time before union with rUK, similar in conditions to Norway it is no doubt they draw inspiration from their immediate neighbours and northern regionhood (Bratberg and Brandal, 2015).

Estonia is a case in point for Scotland, it's continual peripheral position means that Hilson (2010) and Strang's (2016) argument that Norden is isolationist, means that Scotland's criteria although perhaps more expansive in political terms, less in cultural may be a significant deal breaker. As Bailes, Þórhallsson and Johnstone (2013) note, the Nordic connection is not going to drift away in the long term. The independence movement has certainly utilised images of the Nordic countries in regards to juxtaposing its vision of an egalitarian, politically active, and socially fair state, it certainly continues an already formalised understanding of unionist versus nationalist dynamic of Marr (1992). However, it differs in many ways. Not all groups fully agree that a Nordic model is desirable or realistic there is a desire from groups such as Radical Independence and Common Weal to set an even more progressive agenda. Limited understanding from National Collective and Radical Independence suggests that formal links are not on the public domain or are more sceptical of the role of the SNP in delivering such as radical set of social goals.

Overall, whilst the Nordic cooperative dimension may remain on the table for Scottish independence elites, it remains a minority phenomenon. Softer meanings and connotations of Norden play a continual alliancing tool that aligns the public with the region, and many of the desires stem from wanting a different relationship with the UK rather than establishing formal links with Norden. Future studies may want to reflect on the continual absence of attitudinal data amongst the electorate on Scottish Nordic relations.



## 7. Interview Profiles

Angus MacDonald – 2/11/2015: Angus MacDonald is the MSP for Falkirk East in the Scottish Parliament. As a Member of the Scottish Parliament, Angus served as a member of the Public Petitions Committee and the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee.

Cat Boyd – 30/9/2015: Cat Boyd is a Scottish trade union activist who was a co-founder of the Radical Independence Campaign and the Scottish Left Project. She was a prominent figure during the Scottish independence referendum, 2014. Following the referendum, she is one of the people credited with bringing together RISE - Scotland's Left Alliance, a new coalition of leftists and progressive nationalists.

Patrick Harvey – 17/8/2015: Patrick Harvey is the co-convenor of the Scottish Green Party (with Maggie Chapman) and Member of the Scottish Parliament for the Glasgow region.

Rory Scothorne – 23/7/2015: Rory Scothorne was a co-founder of National Collective. The group argued that independence for Scotland could achieve both a realisation of self-determination and a "cultural dawn" for the nation.

Robin McAlpine – 9/7/2015: Robin McAlpine is director of Common Weal, Scotland. Common Weal is a 'think and do tank' campaigning for social and economic equality in Scotland.

Lesley Riddoch – 24/7/2015: Lesley Riddoch is a radio broadcaster and journalist who founded Nordic Horizons. Nordic Horizons is an informal group of Scottish professionals who want to raise the standard of knowledge and debate about life and policy in the Nordic nations.

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