The Imagined community of Scotland in the narratives and rhetoric of the Scottish National Party from the Independence Referendum to the Brexit Referendum

A case study of the construction of a national identity within a nation region.

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Abstract

This thesis conducts a case study on how the idea of a Scottish nation and Scottish independence have been constructed and changed within the political discourse produced by the Scottish National Party during the period around the Scottish independence referendum in 2014 and around the Brexit referendum in 2016. This will be done by conducting a textual analysis with a set of operational questions on written material produced by the Scottish National Party during the period of time previously mentioned, based on the theoretical framework of social constructivism and nationalism with a focus on “imagined communities”. The thesis concludes that the idea of Scotland as a nation and Scottish independence is seen as a substantially fairer and more solidary nation than its neighbour to the south, as well that some aspects of the perception of Scottish independence and Scotland’s future have changed over the process from the independence referendum to the Brexit referendum.
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1. Introduction

The United Kingdom and the European Union have for the past 10 years gone through what could be described as something similar of a relationship crisis. The 2016 Brexit referendum on the United Kingdom’s future in the European Union and its outcome have ultimately strained the relationship between Scotland and the Westminster government and created logistical issues on many levels (Sturgeon, 2019, “Brexit has created a democratic crisis”). The aftermath of the Brexit result, which ultimately determined the end of the United Kingdom’s membership within the European Union, have not only caused headache during the long and tiresome process of determining the different conditions on which the United Kingdom would leave the European Union, but also further illuminated the previous indications of internal political differences between the nations of the United Kingdom (Thompson, 2019, p.141-143). At the moment of writing this thesis, Scotland have prepared for their sixth election for parliament since the devolution and establishment of the Scottish Parliament, with the Scottish National Party claiming their fourth consecutive win with just under half of the Scottish peoples votes in their favour (The Scottish Parliament, 2021, Elections)(Aiton et.al, 2021, p.3). In the Scottish National Party’s manifesto for this election, Nicola Sturgeon and her colleague’s states that the journey towards a second independence referendum have already begun and is at this point an inevitable but also reasonable next step for Scotland and its Scottish people (Scottish National Party, 2021, p.2-3 SNP Manifesto).

This thesis will focus on this debate surrounding Scottish independence and the idea of a Scottish nation in relation to the political discourse of the Scottish National Party, seen from the two perspectives of the Scottish independence referendum in 2014 and the Brexit referendum in 2016. The puzzle and research question of this thesis is:

How has the ideas of a Scottish nation and Scottish independence been constructed in the political discourse of the Scottish National Party from pre Scottish independence referendum to post Brexit referendum?

This thesis will make use of a theoretical framework based on social constructivism and nationalism based on Benedict Anderson’s concept of “imagined communities”. The thesis will conduct a case study based on the research question and theoretical framework, attempting to further illuminate the discourse of the Scottish National Party on the debate on the ideas of Scottish nationhood and independence between the two referendums. This will be done by
conducting a textual analysis based on written material produced by the Scottish national party. The analysis will be constructed into three parts. The first part will analyse the text *Scotland’s Future – Your Guide to an Independent Scotland*, produced by the Scottish government while the Scottish National Party was in office. The second part will analyse articles produced by active members of the Scottish National Party. The last part will compare and contrast the results of the two previous parts. But before this, the entire case study of this thesis will need to be put into context of previous research already made. This will be done in the next part of this thesis.

2. Previous Research and Literature Review

Before one approaches and attempt to analyse the evolvement of the idea of the Scottish nation and Scottish independence within the political discourse in Scotland, it is necessary to consider what has already been discussed and familiarise oneself with the existing debate on the matter.

When it comes to previous research on nation-building and nationalism, there is an abundance of literature and research to go through. The discussion and debate regarding the questions such as “what is a nation” or “how have nations developed into existence over time?”, seems to be as diverse and complex as there are people and unique minds on this earth. Therefore, there is not one unifying consensus on what nationalism actually entails. Instead, there are many different perspectives on what a nation is or what nation-building is, many of which overlap with each other and put emphasis on different aspects of the concept of nationalism. Within this debate and discussion, scholars such as Benedict Anderson, Roger Brubaker, Anthony Smith and many others have over the past decades debated over the different perspectives of nationalism.

Benedict Anderson is one of the most prominent scholars within the debate on nation-building, communities and nationalism. Nations, according to Anderson, are ultimately imagined political communities, both in the sense of its limitations and its sovereignty of their nation (Anderson, 2016, p.5-6). Within a certain community, it is highly unlikely for all of its people to know each and every one of that community. Therefore, the sense of unity between them as one community is imagined and a constructed bond that brings them together (Anderson, 2016,
This nation in which the community exist within, is limited in its imagination as all nations in fact do have boundaries that border other nations and their respective imagined communities (Anderson, 2016, p.7). Anderson’s perspective on the complex question of nationhood and national identity brings a very interesting and important aspect to the debate.

Building on similar thoughts of the origin of nationalism, Roger Brubaker discusses the changing discourse surrounding the discussions around nationalism in his book *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the question in the New Europe*. Here Brubaker investigates the development and changes of different theoretical perspectives on nationhood and nationalism with the focus on how they exist as well as how they came to emerge in existence (Brubaker, 1999, p.13-17). Brubaker argues and questions the traditional theories of nationalism with discussing different perspectives of social constructivism in relation to nation-building, as in that the notion of a national identity and relation to a nation is in fact constructed (Brubaker, 1999, p. 13-17). Nationalism, according to Brubaker, is a product produced by different political fields and not the nations by themselves, it is practiced and created more as we go along and not as an entity (Brubaker, 1999, p.17-18).

Another leading scholar within the debates of the theories of nationalism is Anthony Smith. Smith takes on a slightly different approach than the previously mentioned scholars have had. Contrary, Smith does not put as much emphasize on the perspective of constructed national identities and nationhood influenced by social constructivism, but he rather argues that nationalism can exist on its own without a particular nation connected to the thought of nationalism, however not that nations could exist without a thought of nationalism (Smith, 2001, p.10).

Based on the many perspectives and opinion surrounding nationalism and nation-building, as a region of the United Kingdom, Scotland adds another interesting layer to the discussion of identity and nationalism. Anssi Paasi discusses the concept of regions and the regional dynamics within Europe as well as the ever changing and redefining of the concept of what a region actually entails (Paasi, 2009, p.464-465). The concept and debate of regions and regionalism within Europe have engaged many opinions on the correct blueprint of a region,
however, the spectrum on which region and regionalism is discussed varies greatly (Paasi, 2009, p.454-456). As Paasi describes, regions can in many ways be no more than a loose idea of a community and regional identity, or regions can be based on a deep and rich history with a fully developed regional identity that recognise itself as a possible independent and sovereign country (Paasi, 2009, p.465-466). Regions and regionalism hold different understandings depending on were in Europe one might be and also how regions have been viewed over the course of history. Some countries have a very deep and strong relationship to regions such as Germany and Austria, while others such as France and Spain have had less emphasis on regions but are now starting to shift towards regionalism (Paasi, 2009, p.465). In the United Kingdom’s case, the increasing regionalism have been ongoing for a long period and is evident in the devolution in 1997 which later resulted in the implementing of the Scottish parliament in 1999 (Paasi, 2009, p.465) (Rönnquist, 2001, p.103-104).

Paasi further elaborates the connection between identity and regions in his paper on “The Region, identity and power” where he argues that regions are not necessarily a ready-made concept, but instead to consider the larger context in which regions emerge (Paasi, 2011, p.11). Politics, culture, economics, history etc. all play a part in the construction of the regions as the regions are not independent actors but part of a process as well as social and institutional structures (Paasi, 2011, p.11). According to Paasi, regions can be seen as historical processes that are based on its territorial, symbolic and institutional shaping as well as the social structures of consciousness surrounding the identity of the region (Paasi, 2011, p.12-13). All of these factors influence the structure of a region as well as the culture, nature and people of a specific region which in turn affects the process of identity building of a region (Paasi, 2011, p.12-14).

The concept of regions is also discussed by Gordon MacLeod in his paper “In what sense a region? Place hybridity, symbolic shape, and institutional formation in (post-)modern Scotland”, but with a focus on the issues of Scotland and the United Kingdom (MacLeod, 1998, p.834-835). MacLeod discusses Scotland as a special case in itself and describes Scotland’s institutional form as a “stateless nation” or a “national region” (MacLeod, 1998, p.836). To understand the region that is Scotland, MacLeod employs a similar analysis as Paasi, but focuses more on the emergence and evolution of regions within a socio spatial structure and consciousness of society that in return puts emphasis on the history, cultural identity and
institutional boundaries of a region (MacLeod, 1998, p.834-835). In the case of Scotland, when entering into a union with England in 1707, the Scottish nation, as it were, never formally ceased to exist (Macleod, 1998, p.341). Instead, Scotland kept many of its institutional systems such as educational, legal and religious institutions as well as much of its local government which in return enabled Scotland to retain its civil society and much of its cultural autonomy (MacLeod, 1998, p.841). Drawing on Benedict Andersons concept of a nation as an “imagined community”, Macleod further discusses Scotland in relation to its social structures within its community and ultimately the collective memory of the region that evolves and solidifies the cultural image of Scotland which ties together the nation of Scotland to its regional territory (MacLeod, 1998, p.842-843). MacLeod and Paasi both bring a deeper understanding of the complexities when analysing and studying regions in all its forms. Building on the many perspectives and opinions surrounding the concept of nations and nationalism while considering the situation for a, as MacLeod puts is, stateless nation or national region, can be a valuable addition when discussing the political debate within Scotland and the United Kingdom.

In more recent years, the political debate has mainly focused on the discourse surrounding the Scottish referendum in 2014 for an independent Scotland and the following Brexit referendum in 2016 from a Scottish perspective. For quite some time now, Scotland and the United Kingdom have been standing in what could be called a political crossroads. One of these roads is for Scotland to break loose from the union of the United Kingdom and continue on their own sovereign and independent path, the other is to simply stay put in the union as a nation without any sovereign power. According to M. K Thompson, this is evident when considering the political landscape between Scotland and Westminster during recent years. Even since before the Scottish referendum and the Brexit referendum, the political climate between the two nations seems to have begun to deteriorate as their respective parliament have started to drift in opposite directions which have ultimately strained the relationship within the union (Thompson, 2019, p.141-143). The election result of the Brexit referendum was a clear and significant sign as 62% of the Scottish population voted to remain in the European Union and ultimately further displayed the diverging political rift between Holyrood and Westminster (Thompson, 2019, p.141-143). This issue has sparked a large and inevitable discussion on how the different voices in the union of the United Kingdom are being heard in Westminster, which ultimately leads to the question that if they are not listened to, is there any reason to stay in the Union anymore?
Furthermore, X. Hubert Rioux discusses in his article the growing political rift between the Scottish politics and the British politics in terms of the growing difference between the development of nationalism in the two respective nations (Rioux, 2020, p.16). Rioux argues that this political rift correlates to the growing divergence between Scottish nationalism and English nationalism, which according to Rioux can be seen for example in the election results of the Brexit referendum (Rioux, 2020, p.12,16). This creates an economical power shift as Scotland argues for their sovereignty and is increasingly more attractive for foreign economical investors which could potentially provide the sense on independence needed for regaining sovereignty and joining the EU (Rioux, 2020, p.16-17).

The debate surrounding Scottish Independence is not necessarily a new phenomenon. As Ralf Rönnquist discusses, the ambiguity of British nationhood and identity in relation to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have existed within the United Kingdom and at times caused tension and conflicts between two or several of the different nations (Rönnquist, 2001, p.103-104). Slowly but surely, this union have begun to erode over the years, resulting in for example the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 with an overwhelming majority in the 1997 election on the matter with 73% in favour of the Scottish Parliament (Rönnquist, 2001, p.103-104). The long history between England and Scotland with the unification between the two in 1707, creating Great Britain, have certainly been tense at times in the past while still a rather peaceful relationship between the two have grown more prosperous as time have moved on (Rönnquist, 2001, p.103-105).

Montserrat Guibernau discusses Scotland and nation-building right after the Scottish Parliament was established, the relationship, or struggle, between Scotland and England as Scotland have over the years of struggle to regain independence and push beyond the fragile cultural recognition they were able to keep as they descended into the union with England (Guibernau, 1999, p.36, 44-47). Both Guibernau and Rönnquist discusses the issue of national identity within the United Kingdom, specifically the ambiguity of the British identity as it does not have a clear distinction between what is British and what is English (Guibernau, 1999, p.49)(Rönnquist, 2001, p.1003-105). On the other hand, there is a much more clear and established difference between a Scottish identity and British identity, which in return could
possibly make certain debates and discussion more difficult to bring forward, according to Guibernau, as some might ultimately have very different opinions on what national identities are unifying and which ones differentiate (Guibernau, 1999, p.49).

In more recent studies, the relationship between Scotland and England in relation to independence have been studied through the discourse by different parties in the Scottish political arena. Robin Engström have written several papers on the political discourse within Scottish politics as well as the debate surrounding the Scottish independence referendum. In one of his studies, Engström studied the use of communication and political discourse on the social media platform Twitter by the two campaigning sides of the Scottish independence referendum, the Yes vs No side (Engström, 2020, p.581). Here, Engström compared and analysed the different communicative strategies as well as choice of political discourse material of the two campaigns, the official pro-independence campaign “Yes Scotland” backed by the Scottish National Party, the Scottish Green Party as well as the Scottish Socialist party and its counterpart, the pro-union campaign “Better Together” backed by Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats (Engström, 2020, p.581, 597). In Engström’s findings in this paper, the differences of the two campaigns paints an interesting picture of the political discourse used within Scottish and British politics. The “Yes Scotland” campaign emphasized a narrative of Scottishness in their communication, whilst the “Better Together” campaign used a narrative of Britishness in theirs (Engström, 2020, p.587). Furthermore, the “Yes Scotland” campaign frequently used positive and optimistic discourse when envisioning the future of Scotland, while the “Better Together” campaign used a more rational narrative focusing on how the union would stand stronger together (Engström, 2020, p.588-589). Engström highlights and discusses the differences within the debate on Scottish independence that took place prior to the referendum, while also explaining how the different strategies of the campaigns reached out to voters.

It is towards this background that this thesis will take place. Based on the past discussions and reflections on nation-building and nationalism as well as the debates within Scottish and British politics in relation to Scottish independence, this thesis will attempt to further elaborate and illuminate the discussion around the political discourse of Scottish nationhood and independence. But it will do this from the perspective of the Scottish National Party and their
political discourse. This thesis will study the construction of the Scottish nation and future seen through the perspective and political discourse with a focus on the debate prior of the Scottish independence referendum in 2014 and following the Brexit referendum in 2016. The aim of this thesis will be further elaborated and distinguished in the next section.

3. Aim and Research question
The ambiguity of nationalism as well as its relation to the United Kingdom with its many nations have been a subject for discussion for quite some time previous to this thesis as can be seen in the literature review. This thesis, however, will focus on the construction of the idea of a Scottish nation and a Scottish identity within the political rhetoric and discourse of the Scottish National Party. This will be done by comparing and analysing material produced by the Scottish National Party in relation to the debate on Scottish independence surrounding the Scottish independence referendum in 2014 to the aftermath and debate following the Brexit referendum in 2016. The aim of this thesis is therefore to compare and analyse the discourse and the debate created by the Scottish National Party surrounding Scottish nationalism and nation-building during these two political events through the lens of social constructivism and nationalism as discussed by Benedict Anderson as imagine communities. The research question for this thesis is the following:

How has the ideas of a Scottish nation and Scottish independence been constructed in the political discourse of the Scottish National Party from pre Scottish independence referendum to post Brexit referendum?

This thesis seeks to illuminate and create better understanding in what ways the Scottish National Party have contributed to the construction and reconstruction of the idea of Scotland as a nation, but also to see if the political discourse has change throughout the period between the Scottish independence referendum and the Brexit referendum. As will be discussed more in depth later in this thesis, this thesis will make use of and analyse different material and documents produced either by the Scottish government, the Scottish parliament or the Scottish National Party in order to gain knowledge on the construction of Scottish nationalism.
Therefore, in this case, it is needed to provide a number of operational questions in order to critically analyse the content and context of the different material and documents.

The following operational questions will be used in order to answer the research question of this thesis:

How is the thought of Scotland as a nation constructed in the material? What constitutes being Scottish, how is the Scottish identity formulated?

How is an independent and sovereign Scotland motivated?

How is Scotland placed in the international arena of politics, and in relation to the European Union?

This thesis will attempt to put the evolution and creation of the idea on Scotland as a nation and its identity in relation on how this has been portrayed within the political discourse of the Scottish National Party. But also in a the larger context of what the Scottish identity and the nation building surrounding Scotland and Scottish independence entails and how it is construct through the concepts of nationalism, social constructivism.

As previously mentioned, focus of this thesis will be on the political discourse of one party, the Scottish National Party. The reason for this is that the Scottish National Party is at the time of writing this thesis the largest party within the Scottish parliament and it is therefore reasonable to focus on the party that currently has the most influence on Scottish politics (The Scottish Parliament, 2021, Elections)(Aiton et.al, 2021, p.3). However, the Scottish National Party is not the only political party in Scotland and it is not the only party who supports Scottish independence. One could choose more parties to include within this study and debate the many different opinions and broad spectre of the Scottish political arena, for there are many opinions to uncover. But, for this study, the very essence is to analyse and illuminate the role of the Scottish nation and Scottish independence through the eyes of the, at the moment of writing, biggest party in the Scottish parliament. This naturally limits the scope of this thesis and will reduce the scope of the outcome as well. This study will therefore not be representative of the discourse and opinion of the entirety of Scotland’s citizens and the parties represented within
the Scottish parliament. However, it will possibly broaden and enrich the understanding of the complexity and everchanging nature within Scottish politics.

The scope of this thesis is also limited to 2013 until 2021. This particular timeframe includes time before the Scottish Independence Referendum in 2014 as well as time after the Brexit Referendum in 2016. This timeframe was chosen to both include the debate and discourse as Scotland and the Scottish National Party prepared for the referendum on independence, as well as the continued debate and discourse on Scottish independence but in the light of both the Scottish referendum and the Brexit referendum in the past. This only a short period of time in the large sense regarding the construction of Scotland’s nationhood and the discourse and debate surrounding Scottish independence, but it will hopefully illuminate the current political debate better and shine new light and perspectives on the discussion.

4. Theoretical framework
As have been discussed in the previous research section of this thesis, nation-building and nationalism will play an important role in this study of Scotland and nationhood. Nationalism does not necessarily translate to one unanimous thought of what this concept entails. But this thesis will make use of the perspective of Benedict Anderson and his concept of “imagined communities”. This thesis will also make use of the theory social constructivism in order to better understand the construction of the Scottish nation and its identity.

As briefly discussed in the literature review, Benedict Andersons concept of “imagined communities” is based on the idea that the definition of a nation could be described as an imagined political community (Anderson, 2016, p.6-7). The community of people within a nation are bound together with a sense of common bond based on their national identity, that is ultimately limited to the nation they are existing within, but is still strong enough to keep them together (Anderson, 2016, p.6-7). The nation is portrayed as an imagined community because it creates a deep sense of comradeship between individuals that strengthen their sense of belonging to a nation and their willingness to continue to build and construct the common cause of the nation (Anderson, 2016, p.7). The imagination and construction of national communities are also in many ways rooted within culture and history, as history are often thought of as
immortalised in relation to nation and nationhood and therefore often a unifying concept within
the imagination of a community (Anderson, 2016, p.7-8). However, these imaginations are
based on the community in which they are constructed within, making them both unique to that
nation but also solely created by the perspective of that community (Anderson, 2016, p.7-8).
The concept of imagined communities comes with a great and helpful framework when
discussing the construction of nationhood and national identity, which in return will create a
great framework and basis in relation to the operational questions and research question of this
thesis.

This thesis will also make use of social constructivism which will bring a very helpful and
insightful perspective along with imagined communities on how different behaviours affect the
structures within communities, nations, states and further on the international stage. The
fundamental analytical argument of social constructivism is that the realities of these different
social and political communities are incapable of achieving full objectivity of their own
understanding of their reality (Heywood, 2015, p.75). In this sense, the different individuals
and communities all exist within an inter-subjective reality and social world, as opposed to a
social world that exists “outside” in an external world separate from the interactions of
individuals and communities (Heywood, 2015, p.74). It highlights and emphasizes the
importance and influence of shared values, beliefs and assumptions that individuals as well as
societies and communities construct within their reality which ultimately creates an identity and
shared interests between individuals and states (Heywood, 2015, p.75-76). Its importance can
highlight and explain the complexity not only in a larger sense but also within the political arena
of political discourse and debate on how the structures of certain issues have come to be. In this
sense, social constructivism comes in handy when discussing the structure and construction of
national identity and nationalism within the political discourse. Social constructivism can with
its focus on socially constructed structures and behaviours within a society illuminate the
framework in which the nationhood and identity of Scotland have flourished within, as for
example within the political discourse of the Scottish National Party.

These two theories connect to the research question and operational questions through their
focus on nation, community and the construction of ideas in relation to society and nationhood.
Together they create a solid base and provides the tools on which the questions can analyse the material within this case study and make sense of the outcome.

5. Methods and Material
As discussed earlier in this thesis, the objective of this study is to investigate how the political discourse surrounding Scottish independence and the Scottish nation have evolved or changed through the eyes of the Scottish National Party. This will be done by comparing and analysing the political discourse of the Scottish National Party between two different political events through a social constructivism and nationalism lens. These two events that will be up for scrutiny is the discourse leading up to the Scottish independence referendum in 2014 and the political discourse after the Brexit referendum in 2016 in the UK, with a focus on the political discourse by the Scottish National Party in relation to these two events. In order to carry out this study a framework needs to be established within which the analysis will take place, but also how this analysis will be conducted.

5.1. Case study
The approach and research design for this investigation is a single case study. A single case study focuses in detail on one particular case that it investigates and analyses (Bryman, 2012, p.66). The complexity and focused nature of a certain phenomena or certain topic is what makes a case study a good fit when the aim is to intensely study and analyse a limited research area in order to produce a highly detailed and deep understanding for the topic in question (Bryman, 2012, p.66-68). Since this thesis will focus on one single case of how the ideas surrounding the Scottish nation and independence been constructed within the political discourse of the Scottish National Party between the Scottish Independence referendum to the Brexit referendum, a single case study design is a well-suited choice for this thesis. The most important aspect within a case study, is that the topic or case is an object of interest entirely on its own and the objective of the case study is to provide as much depth and insight as possible of the case that it is properly illuminated and creates better understanding (Bryman, 2012, p.68-69). The framework of a case study also fits well with qualitative research methods which will also be used within the case study conducted in this thesis (Bryman, 2012, p.68). This thesis will make use of a textual analysis method and will be further discussed later in this part of the thesis.
The case study design was chosen for this thesis based on the criteria previously mentioned. The aim of the thesis is to illuminate how the ideas on the Scottish nation and Scottish independence have been constructed through the political discourse of the Scottish National Party. The case is therefore to compare and analyse material produced by the Scottish National Party in depth in order to understand the influences and the perspective of the Scottish National Party on the nationhood and independence of Scotland.

5.2. Material

The material that will be investigated in the study through the lens of social constructivism and nationhood is material solely produced by individuals within the Scottish National Party and the Scottish National Party as part of the Scottish government. As discussed earlier in this part of the thesis, the Scottish National Party does not represent the entirety of the Scottish citizens and the other parties active within the Scottish parliament, however, the party is the largest and currently the party with majority in the Scottish government and parliament (The Scottish Parliament, 2021, Elections)(Aiton et.al, 2021, p.3).

The first body of material relates to the Scottish Independence referendum. The text Scotland’s Future – Your Guide to an Independent Scotland was produced by the Scottish Government in 2013 as an educating presentation of what Scotland could possibly achieve as an independent and sovereign country leading up to the referendum (Scottish Government, 2013, p.i). This piece of material holds the then Scottish government’s shared vision of what a future independent and sovereign Scotland could be like, as well the paper describes both heart questions for Scotland but also practical framework of how the devolution of the Scottish nation would commence (Scottish Government, 2013, p.40-45). At the time of production and publication of this text, the Scottish National Party held the majority of the seats in the Scottish parliament and have done so for the past two election (The Scottish Parliament, 2021, Elections)(Aiton et.al, 2021, p.3). However, the Scotland’s Future – Your Guide to an Independent Scotland was produced commonly by the Scottish government to provide the Scottish citizens with as accurate information as possible in order for the citizens to make an informed decision on Scottish independence (Scottish Government, 2013, p.i, viii).
This thesis will also make use of 20 articles produced by members of the Scottish National Party as well as the Scottish National Party itself. These articles were all chosen from the Scottish National Party’s news section on their website, which is moderated by the party itself. On this website a filter was used to locate the articles that discussed the past independence referendum as well as the Brexit referendum. The articles, unlike the paper Scotland’s Future – Your Guide to an Independent Scotland, are not government issued documents but instead articles written by active members with high positions within the Scottish National Party and therefore describes their own political opinions on the debate surrounding independence and Scottish nationhood, but through the perspective of the Scottish National Party. However, these articles are highly relevant as they describe and illuminate the more current debate and discussion and provides this case study with a deep and interesting perspective on independence and the Scottish nation in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum.

5.3. Method

This thesis will conduct a textual analysis in an attempt to illuminate the construction and changes of the ideas of the Scottish nation and Scottish independence through the political discourse communicated by the Scottish National Party amidst the tense political climate surrounding the pivotal referendums in 2014 and 2016 in Scotland and the United Kingdom. This will be done by using a method of political textual analysis in order to analyse and contrast the rhetoric and narrative discourse of the Scottish National Party circumstances these two political events. In order to thoroughly comprehend and analyse the political text this thesis will use, it is important to understand the larger context in which they have been written. This is why this study will use the framework which a textual analysis provides, it forces the researcher and future readers to acknowledge the importance of understanding how language and social structures such as culture, history and politics can in many ways affect communication and literature (Allen, 2018, p.2). In light of what this study will attempt to investigate, a method and design that focuses on not only the discourse of the texts but also the circumstance in which they were written in, is crucial for the understanding of the outcome of this thesis. The theoretical framework will provide a structure in which this analysis will take place. In accordance with the textual analysis, the material will be analysed from a social constructivism
and nationalism lens to further understand the political discourse of the Scottish National Party in relation to the Scottish nation and Scottish independence.

6. Analysis

The thesis has now arrived at the analytical part of this study. In this part, the political discourse produced by individuals of the Scottish National Party, the party itself as well as the Scottish Government when the Scottish National Party was in office, will be textually analysed and compared. The aim of the analytical discussion is to understand and illuminate the question of how the ideas of a Scottish nation and independence have been portrayed and constructed within the political discourse of the Scottish National Party spanning from before the independence referendum to after the Brexit referendum. This analysis also aims to discuss any possible changes in the political discourse of the Scottish National Party between the material from the independence referendum and the material form the Brexit referendum regarding Scotland’s future and how the vision of Scotland and its national identity is portrayed and constructed within the different texts.

This part of the thesis has been divided into three sections. The first section will describe and analyse the text Scotland’s Future – Your Guide to an Independent Scotland produced by the Scottish Government in 2013. The second section will describe and analyse the articles produced by individuals within the party as well as the Scottish National Party itself between 2019-2021. The final section of this analytical part of this study, will compare and contrast the two sides of the political discourse of the Scottish National Party and discuss the outcome of this study. The entire analysis will make use of the theoretical framework presented earlier in this thesis, as well as the operational question in order to analyse the texts in a structured and organised manner.
6.1. The White Paper and the Scottish Independence Referendum

6.1.1. Introduction
This part of the analysis will describe and analyse the discourse within the text *Scotland’s Future – Your Guide to an Independent Scotland*. This analysis will be structured based on the operational questions stated earlier in this thesis. The analysis will look at the text through the three operational questions respectively as well as using the theoretical framework, giving examples from the text to provide further understanding in the analysis of the discourse used in the material. After the text have been analysed and discussed using the operational questions, the findings of the questions will be shortly summarized and further discussed before the analysis move on to the next part of the analysis.

6.1.2. Scotland’s Future – Your Guide to an Independent Scotland
The White Paper, or as it is officially known, *Scotland’s Future – Your Guide to an Independent Scotland*, was produced and published in 2013 by the Scottish Government as an informative and enlightening text for the people of Scotland of what Scotland could potentially achieve if the region gained sovereignty and independence from the union with England. The text was published prior to the Scottish independence referendum in 2014 and holds an important piece of example of the political discourse at the time within Scottish politics on the ideas of Scotland as an independent nation.

In the opening section of the text in question, the Scottish Government states that Scotland is facing a choice, and that choice is between two futures (Scottish Government, 2013, p.i). The choices are between Yes or No. If the choice is yes, then Scotland begins its journey as an independent country with equal opportunities as other nations were the people of Scotland make the decisions, or in other words, “Scotland’s future will be in Scotland’s hands.” (Scottish Government, 2013, p.i). On the other hand, if the choice is no, then Scotland will stagnate and ultimately lose its opportunity for its own voice and instead remain within a situation where the power of deciding on its own autonomy is out of Scotland’s hands (Scottish Government, 2013, p.i). In the preface of the paper, the then First Minister of Scotland and the then party leader of the Scottish National party, Alex Salmond, continues this discussion. Salmond alludes on the great national story that is Scotland’s history and culture, shaped and constructed by the people
of Scotland that ultimately have created the modern Scotland we recognise today (Scottish Government, 2013, p.viii). A people that should have the opportunity to continue to build a nation based on the priorities of the Scottish community and values of the Scottish people, instead of those of Westminster (Scottish Government, 2013, p.viii). Those arguments are the ground for asking what constitutes the Scottish identity? How is the thought of Scotland as a nation constructed in the White Paper?

As seen above, the tone for the idea of the Scottish nation is established early in the White Paper. Scotland is portrayed as a region and a nation with a long and rich history that goes beyond the union with England in 1707 and that is now re-emerging again as a nation working towards the independence the country once (Scottish Government, 2013, p.3). The weight of Scotland’s history is heavily illuminated in the White Paper along with Scotland’s culture and traditions, as one of the key features of the Scottish nation and a solid foundation of the identity of the Scottish people (Scottish Government, 2013, p.309). This cultural heritage and history solidify Scotland’s place within its region as well as strengthen the national identity, but also in relation towards its neighbours beyond the Scottish borders (Scottish Government, 2013, p.309). The construction of the Scottish community is seemingly argued to be rooted in the Scottish national history, but a large emphasize on what the Scottish nation and identity constitutes is largely related to the kind of community and society Scotland want to achieve, or construct, for its people.

Building on the emphasize on Scotland’s rich and ancient history, the discourse of the White Paper also focuses on the difference between Scottish values and values derived from Westminster decision making. There is an emphasize on the values that are inherent for Scotland and that are portrayed as more democratic, fairer and expanding the overall well-fare for the Scottish society and community (Scottish Government, 2013, p.37, 40). These values are described as juxtaposed to the values of Westminster and Westminster decision making, that instead are portrayed as unsuitable for the direction that Scotland and the Scottish people want to go (Scottish Government, 2013, p.37, 40). Examples such as the implementation of the so called “bedroom tax” and budget cuts that are causing repercussions for the Scottish population that potentially could rise the child poverty rate within the country, all of which are results of decisions made outside of Scotland’s jurisdiction and without the Scottish community
in mind according to the Scottish government (Scottish Government, 2013, p.40-41). The values of Scotland and the Scottish people is emphasized to focus on the socio-economic equality within the Scottish community that gives all citizens equal opportunities regardless of background and ultimately construct and build a fairer society for all in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2013, p.40).

As previously discussed, the discourse and debate of the White Paper is direct in many ways, clearly stating the differences between the decisions made by Westminster and how these would be done differently in the hands of Scotland. But in some ways, the discourse still remains optimistic in relation to the United Kingdom. As is stated in the preface by Salmond, England is not an enemy in any way, in fact, England are in many ways family and will remain so even after a possible full devolution (Scottish Government, 2013, p.ix). However, the Scottish nation and its sense of community based on values constructed by the people of Scotland depicts a very different sense of nation compared to the British of English nation described in the White Paper. Westminster represents the values imposed on Scotland as the government that the Scottish people did not vote for, while Scotland and the Scottish nation are depicted as the bearer of prosperity and social equality of its people and nation (Scottish Government, 2013, p.41). The focus of the debate on independence is primarily on how Scotland can construct a better community and society though the decisions of the Scottish people and the foundation of Scottish values and history which is well described in the White Paper through the following quote:

“The most important point, however, in considering what an independent Scotland will look like is this: it will look like the kind of Scotland we as a people choose to build. We will take the decisions. What happens to our country will be our responsibility.” (Scottish Government, 2013, p.47).

Ultimately, it is the Scottish people’s idea of a Scotland that benefit its entire population that will make the most prosperous and beneficial decisions that will construct a different, and according to the Scottish Government, better future for the community of Scotland.

Building on this debate on the Scottish nation and its identity, the debate on the Scottish independence and sovereignty begins to take form, for the question is, how is an independent
and sovereign Scotland motivated? The core of this discussion is well presented in the text of the White Paper:

“Greater certainty in the future comes not from leaving decisions to others, but from taking responsibility ourselves. Scotland has greater security when we have greater control over the direction we take as a nation.” (Scottish Government, 2013, p.58).

As discussed above, some of the core arguments for Scotland to re-gain independence and sovereignty builds on the notion of the Scottish history as a nation through centuries, even before the 1707 union with England (Scottish Government, 2013, p.3). But the debate is not solely based on history and culture. The sovereignty and independence of Scotland is also argued for as a way to re-instate the power that was lost in 1707 in Scotland and for its people to choose the path best suited for the nation, without the risk of being side-lined by the government in Westminster (Scottish Government, 2013, p.44). The White Paper uses examples of other smaller independent countries in Europe to visualise the relevance for independence and sovereignty in Scotland. Countries such as Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland are used as a template of what smaller countries, both to its territory and population, can accomplish as independent and sovereign voices in their own country, but also within the international arena of politics (Scottish Government, 2013, p.43, 45, 59-60). It is also a way for Scotland to take a step into the bigger unions of the world as a fully independent country and nation, such as the European Union and the United Nations (Scottish Government, 2013, p.45). These are the opportunities and benefits of independent and sovereign countries that Scotland wish to re-gain according to the White Paper (Scottish Government, 2013, p.59).

Along with this discussion, the White Paper also further highlights the growing rift between Scottish politics and British politics. As previously mentioned, the growing in-equality on social-economic matters in Scotland and the United Kingdom, along with the growing disagreement on the distribution of finances and the imbalance of the economy are only a few key aspects that the Scottish Government and Scottish politics as a whole do not agree on the agenda set by the Westminster decision making (Scottish Government, 2013, p.86-90). Remaining within the union of the United Kingdom will, according to the Scottish Government, only continue to restrict Scotland and the people of Scotland’s opportunities of creating a more stable society built on fair work opportunities, the ability to invest on further expansion of the security of the welfare system, but also to promote stable and sustainable solutions for the
Scottish community (Scottish Government, 2013, p.89-92). With independence Scotland have the opportunity to reconstruct and build a different structure that promotes solidarity, fairness and sustainable growth over economy and finances, labour market policies as well as welfare regulations and can therefore continue to grow in the direction chosen by the Scottish population instead of the one decided by Westminster (Scottish Government, 2013, p.91-94). As argued by the Scottish Government in the White Paper, these choices are not available for Scotland as long as Scotland remains part of the union of the United Kingdom (Scottish Government, 2013, p.90). Hence, the question of a sovereign and independent Scotland is not only a discussion on Scotland and the Scottish people having the choice to decide the direction of their future within Scotland, but also voicing the opinions of Scotland within the community of the international arena of politics.

How is Scotland located within the international community of politics and how is Scotland placed in relation to the European Union? This question becomes an important topic of debate in the White Paper and is very much based on the debate surrounding Scottish independence that has previously been discussed in this analysis. The Scottish Government promotes the idea of an independent Scotland as a dedicated and active member of the global political community and that will gladly remain a member within the European Union, but also in NATO and the United Nations (Scottish Government, 2013, p.206-208, 215). An independent Scotland as a nation within the international political community have the opportunity to affect not only matters close to the Scottish society, but also to affect the world outside of the Scottish borders and through this help create a better community for Scotland domestically, but also to continue to grow the relationship with the international community (Scottish Government, 2013, p.207-208). It is made clear by the Scottish Government that the interests and priorities of Scotland and the cooperation that an independent Scotland could have with international communities, cannot properly function as long as Scotland is not an independent and sovereign country itself (Scottish Government, 2013, p.209-210). This is especially made clear on the question of the European Union.

The opportunity to operate as an independent nation within the European Union is a greatly important aspect of sovereignty for Scotland according to the White Paper and the Scottish government (Scottish Government, 2013, p.209-212). It is seen as an important benefit for the
entire community and society of Scotland to continue the relationship with the European Union as it not only opens the door to the international political arena, but it also benefits the people of Scotland with economic growth and exchange of goods and opportunities (Scottish Government, 2013, p.207-209). The opportunity to engage in deeper communication and collaboration with the European Union and its member states is argued to be of great essence and gives Scotland an equal voice within the context of European politics (Scottish Government, 2013, p.216-218). However, the White Paper also discusses the emerging issues of change in rhetoric and attitude in the United Kingdom and Westminster towards the European Union (Scottish Government, 2013, p.210). The complication of a coming referendum, issued by the Conservative Party, on whether or not the United Kingdom should remain within the European Union is discussed in the White Paper as a serious issue that could potentially force Scotland to leave the European Union is Scotland in fact choses to stay within the union with the United Kingdom (Scottish Government, 2013, p.60, 210). Scotland opposes this strongly and emphasizes the importance of building and maintaining the relationship with the European Union and seize the opportunities the union provides for Scotland as a nation and its citizens (Scottish Government, 2013, p.210). The Scottish government argues:

“The advantage of independence is that the people of Scotland will have the sole and final say. We will not be taken out of the EU against our wishes as may turn out to be the case if we are not independent.” (Scottish Government, 2013, p.217).

The discussion continues and accentuate the position of Scotland, which is to make its own way on its own terms as an independent nation and stand for openness and collaboration without being side-lined, juxtaposed the position of Westminster that is, according to the Scottish government, becoming increasingly isolated and non-cooperative (Scottish Government, 2013 p.210).

6.1.3. Short Summary
This part of the analysis has highlighted the political discourse made by the Scottish government in 2013 on the debate surrounding the question of independence and sovereignty as well as the idea of the Scottish nation and its relation to the European Union and the international political community in relation to the then upcoming Scottish referendum on independence in 2014. The main theme and focus of the debate in the paper Scotland’s Future – Your Guide to an Independent Scotland is centred around prosperity and opportunity for a different future. This
idea of prosperity and opportunity is embedded within the arguments on the ability for Scotland and the Scottish people to make decisions that are beneficial for the population of Scotland now and in the future, as well as recognising themselves as a country and a nation of their own.

The discourse of the Scottish government focuses on arguments that describes their vision of what an independent Scotland has to offer but also the many positive aspects of being able to conceptualize the Scottish citizens will and values into reality as an independent nation that is able to stand strong on its own. It is clear that the vision and idea of the Scotland nation is deeply rooted in a sense of a Scottish community, constructed over hundreds of years by the Scottish population over history of challenges and resilience for a fairer and solidary Scotland. The imagined community of Scotland differs from the one in Westminster and the United Kingdom according to the Scottish government. As is argued in the White Paper, the Scottish values are constructed on the idea of social equality for the Scottish people, a democratic and fairer society that promotes welfare and prosperity. This is then compared to the values of Westminster that are, according to the White Paper, significantly different in terms of Westminster political priorities that simply do not coincide with those of the Scottish government and the majority of its Scottish citizens. The construction of the idea of the Scottish nation is that of a nation without its sovereign powers, but a nation nevertheless that continues optimistically to work towards independence and for a future in Scotland’s hands.

6.2. Diverting Paths and the Brexit Referendum

6.2.1. Introduction
This part of the analysis will describe and analyse the discourse within selected articles produced by the Scottish National Party and members of the Scottish National Party published on said party’s website between 2018-2021. This part of the analysis will be structured similar as the first part of the analysis, it will be structured based on the three operational questions stated previously in this thesis. The analysis will use the three questions respectively as the articles are described and analysed, using examples from the articles when needed to further illuminate the discourse of the material in relation to the questions and the theoretical framework. After the articles have been analysed and discussed, the findings of the articles will
be shortly summarized and further discussed before the two pieces of material will be compared and contrasted in the last part of this analysis.

6.2.2. The Articles of the Scottish national Party

“…Who should decide our country’s future” asks Nicola Sturgeon, the current first minister of Scotland and the party leader of the Scottish National Party (Sturgeon, 2021, “Who should decide our country’s future, the people of Scotland or Boris Johnson’s Tories?”). It is a question that has dominated the debate and discussion within politics in Scotland since before the Scottish independence referendum in 2014, but has now become even more urgent and focused within the political debate within Scotland and the United Kingdom after the result to stay within the union with the United Kingdom, as well as result to leave the European Union in the Brexit referendum in 2016. In Sturgeon's article “Who should decide our country’s future, the people of Scotland or Boris Johnson’s Tories?”, this simple but significant question discusses the debate that was already in place when the White Paper was produced and published, but the debate is now set after both the Scottish independence referendum and the Brexit referendum. In this article, Sturgeon discusses the importance of Scotland deciding its own fate, based on the opinions and values of the Scottish people whose voices are the ones to be heard when making decisions concerning Scotland and the Scottish community and society (Sturgeon, 2021, “Who should decide our country’s future, the people of Scotland or Boris Johnson’s Tories?”). Beginning with this debate, this analysis will ask the question of how is the thought of Scotland constructed in the articles and how is the Scottish identity formulated?

In Nicola Sturgeon’s speech on St Andrew’s Day in 2019, Sturgeon discusses the possibilities of what kind of a country and a nation Scotland along with its population aspire to be (Sturgeon, 2019, “Nicola Sturgeon’s Speech on St Andrew’s Day”). Sturgeon discusses what kind of ideals that Scotland want to use in order to build a better and fairer future with and refers to the “Declaration of Arbroath”, the statement that was written in the year 1320 and claims the self-determination and sovereignty of Scotland as well as assigns Scotland with its patron saint “the most gentle St Andrew” (Sturgeon, 2019, “Nicola Sturgeon’s Speech on St Andrew’s Day”)(National Records of Scotland, 2020, pp.1-2). It is on these values that Sturgeon urges the Scottish people to continue to build Scotland with solidarity, collective care and a sense of contributing to the community in a larger sense, and to make a choice to chose these values
before the government in Westminster that are imposing, according to Sturgeon, political decisions on a society who did not vote for them (Sturgeon, 2019, “Nicola Sturgeon’s Speech on St Andrew’s Day”). As was discussed in the first part of the analysis, the rich and deep history of Scotland are very much present in today’s discourse on the idea of the Scottish nation as can be seen in this following quote by Sturgeon as she further elaborates on the values of Scotland:

“On our national patron saint’s day we owe it to the people of Scotland to set out a different vision for Scotland” (Sturgeon, 2019, “Nicola Sturgeon’s Speech on St Andrew’s Day”).

Sturgeon continues this discussion in another article, “We’ve made a real difference’- Nicola Sturgeon reflects on 20 years of devolution”, the focus is on the many successes of the devolution and reestablishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, almost 300 years since it was abolished when entering the union with England in 1707 (Sturgeon, 2019, “We’ve made a real difference’- Nicola Sturgeon reflects on 20 years of devolution”). The emphasis is on how Scotland as a whole have come together as a community to construct the Scotland that is based on the values and opinions of the people and with their decisions Scotland is able to continue working towards the future of their choice (Sturgeon, 2019, “We’ve made a real difference’- Nicola Sturgeon reflects on 20 years of devolution”). Scotland and the Scottish Government along with the important contribution of the people of Scotland, continue to structure a nation that builds upon fair and solidary values and that promotes welfare as well as prosperity, according to Sturgeon (Sturgeon, 2019, “We’ve made a real difference’- Nicola Sturgeon reflects on 20 years of devolution”). In another article by Nicola Sturgeon, Sturgeon elaborates the changes after the independence referendum in 2014. Sturgeon argues that although the outcome of the referendum did not achieve Scotland the sovereignty and independence that many had hoped, it still demonstrated the strong idea and identity of Scotland as its citizens took to the streets to debate and visualize the opportunities and community the people of Scotland could build together (Sturgeon, 2019, “The 2014 independence referendum changed Scotland for the better”). However, while discussing the successes of Scotland the tone in the article is rather critical against Westminster and its political agenda. The politics and decision making of Westminster is depicted as “immense damage” on the Scottish society, pointing to unfair taxation that ultimately affects everyone in Scotland and raises the child poverty rate (Sturgeon, 2019, “We’ve made a real difference’- Nicola Sturgeon reflects on 20 years of devolution”). Or as Sturgeon expresses:
“… no Westminster government, of any party, has the right to stand in the way of the sovereign right of the people of Scotland to determine their own future” (Sturgeon, 2019, “The 2014 independence referendum changed Scotland for the better”).

Sturgeon is not the only one to both praise the Scottish people and enhance the idea of Scotland, while also criticising Westminster. Ian Blackford, representing the Scottish National Party in Westminster, discusses and criticises in his article “After 20 years of devolution, it’s time to complete our journey to independence” how the Westminster politics have consistently torn down the social security structure with budget cuts on public services and welfare, Scotland on the other hand has, as Blackford puts it, “… chosen a radically different path.” (Blackford, 2019, “After 20 years of devolution, it’s time to complete our journey to independence”). Scotland’s path has been to improve and reduce the socio-economical gap in the Scottish community while making sure to continue to construct a society based on the values of Scotland and its people, all while being restricted by Scotland’s status as a region (Blackford, 2019, “After 20 years of devolution, it’s time to complete our journey to independence”). This brings the analysis to asking its second question, how is an independent and sovereign Scotland motivated?

Building on the previous discussion, the Scottish National Party presents five reasons why it is important for Scotland to have a choice to decide its own future. The first three reasons discuss the new challenges facing Scotland, such as the looming exit from the European Union against Scotland’s will due to Brexit (Scottish National Party, 2019, “5 reasons why Scotland must have a choice about its future”). But also, how Westminster is no longer a viable option for Scotland as the promises made prior to the Independence Referendum have not been kept by Westminster towards Scotland (Scottish National Party, 2019, “5 reasons why Scotland must have a choice about its future”). Westminster promises for the Scottish voters that their European Union citizenship would be safe if they voted no for independence, only to now being forced to leave the European Union all the same (Scottish National Party, 2019, “5 reasons why Scotland must have a choice about its future”) (Scottish National Party, 2019, “IndyRef 5 years on: Better Together promises have turned to dust). The Scottish National Party argues that the best and most beneficial option for Scotland is to gain independence and with it the opportunities to decide and construct its own path based on the Scottish people’s opinions and
Nicola Sturgeon continues this discussion on how Scottish independence can provide the tools and opportunities for Scotland to achieve its ambitions. As was previously discussed, devolution have already brought a lot of positive and beneficial changes to the Scottish society with stronger welfare, economic growth and stability for Scottish citizens and community which Sturgeon also highlights (Sturgeon, 2019, “Independence can help us achieve our ambitions for Scotland”). The disappointment is clear regarding the false hope imposed by Westminster for a continued relationship with the European Union if Scotland stayed as a part of the United Kingdom, however with the options and opportunities that independence bring to the Scottish community Sturgeon argues that the path of independence will bring Scotland a better future and a more prominent place in the larger sense of the international political community (Sturgeon, 2019, “Independence can help us achieve our ambitions for Scotland”).

Michael Russel expands on the problematic relationship between Scotland and Westminster over the past years since the independence referendum and makes an interesting observation of the imbalance of power between the two (Russell, 2019, “Independence means embracing equality between places large and small”). Devolution and establishment of the Scottish parliament granted Scotland many positive aspects of power, however, it did not provide any sort of structure regarding effective dispute resolutions or any other remedies in case of conflict (Russell, 2019, “Independence means embracing equality between places large and small”). The fact remains, Scotland and the Scottish parliament can be over-ruled, however, Westminster cannot (Russell, 2019, “Independence means embracing equality between places large and small”). The relationship between Scotland and the rule of Westminster is simply not equal and according to Russell, the transition of power is not complete for Scotland (Russell, 2019, “Independence means embracing equality between places large and small”).

“The growing demand for independence for Scotland is an indication of that, and of the need to finish the job by embracing the normality of equality, between people and places large and small” (Russell, 2019, “Independence means embracing equality between places large and small”).
Moving on the same path as Michael Russell, Ian Blackford heavily criticises the Westminster government and strongly emphasizes the importance of Scotland’s choice of future deserves to be in the hands of Scottish voters and Westminster (Blackford, 2019, “Scotland’s future must not be left in the hands of Boris Johnson and Co.”). Scotland have, according to Blackford, for decades been subjected to Tory governments that Scotland have not voted for, imposing decision making onto Scotland that in case of independence would not have happened (Blackford, 2019, “Scotland’s future must not be left in the hands of Boris Johnson and Co.”). Blackford argues that this makes it evident that Scotland and the Scottish people’s opinions and values will either be ignored or simply side-lined by Westminster, leaving an unfair situation for Scotland as a result (Blackford, 2019, “Scotland’s future must not be left in the hands of Boris Johnson and Co.”). The only way to solve this issue is for Scotland to become an independent nation and country and step into the community of European nations (Blackford, 2019, “Scotland’s future must not be left in the hands of Boris Johnson and Co.”).

Similarly to Blackford, Nicola Sturgeon argues that the political disarray surrounding the politics in Westminster and Scotland on independence and the Brexit issue have proved once and for all the seriousness of the diverting relationship between Scotland and Westminster, which ultimately comes down to the Scotland’s decision on its future (Sturgeon, 2019, “It’s time for Scotland to consider its options”). Scotland is yet to reach its full potential as a nation and has the great opportunity to build a better future of the Scottish community, but can only do so with independence according to Sturgeon (Sturgeon, 2018, “Achieving our full potential as an independent nation”). The road towards another independence referendum is slowly taking form as the Scottish Government published a legislation in 2019 that provides the framework for a future referendum, making it a start for another attempt to join “the European family of nations” as Sturgeon puts is (Scottish National Party, 2019, “Independence Referendum Bill: what you need to know)( Sturgeon, 2019, “It’s time for Scotland to consider its options”).

As has already been touched upon by some of the articles previously discussed, the major challenge Scotland has faced during the last years, besides continuously working towards independence, is the results of the Brexit referendum which have left Scotland falling out of the
European Union against its own wishes. This begs the question how is Scotland placed in the international arena of politics, and in relation to the European Union? The majority of the debate surrounding Scotland in relation to the European Union and the international political community comes down to the debate on Brexit and Scottish independence. As Nicola Sturgeon quite directly puts it:

“Scotland did not choose Brexit and we did not choose Boris Johnson. As we face these unprecedented and deeply troubling times, we must ensure that Scotland has the choice of another future – a better future – as an independent nation” (Sturgeon, 2019, “In these dark days for democracy, Scotland must find another way”).

Keith Brown discusses the importance of Scotland in relation to the European Union, building on previous debate Brown argues that self-determination is the key to promote and construct a better future for Scotland as it will be based upon the Scottish people and not on decision making imposed by the Westminster government (Brown, 2019, “Independence is about Scotland joining the world as an equal partner”). This self-determination also includes the decision to join the international political community as an independent and sovereign Scotland, instead of being closed off from the opportunities of cooperation on an international level with the European Union (Brown, 2019, “Independence is about Scotland joining the world as an equal partner”). For Scotland, according to Brown, it is essential to have the opportunity to join the European Union and its community as an equal partner in international politics and continue to breaking down barriers, instead of creating new ones such as Brexit (Brown, 2019, “Independence is about Scotland joining the world as an equal partner”).

Brexit have in many ways created new barriers for Scotland. As has already been discussed, the growing rift between the Scotland and Westminster have evidently gotten worse since after the Brexit referendum. According to Nicola Sturgeon, the Brexit referendum and the aftermath have done substantial damage to the relationship between Scotland and Westminster jeopardized Scotland’s community and citizens (Sturgeon, 2019, “Brexit has created a democratic crisis”). Ian Blackford also discusses the problematic consequences of Brexit on Scotland as a nation region, the political situation between Scotland and Westminster as well as future relationship with the European Union (Ian Blackford, 2019, “Brexit must be stopped – we have to put it back to the people”)(Blackford, 2019, “It’s time to act to prevent the Brexit
catastrophe Scotland faces due to this Tory government”). Blackford argues very clearly the negative aspects of Brexit, describing how it will strip Scottish citizens of their European citizenship and ultimately disrupt people’s lives (Ian Blackford, 2019, “Brexit must be stopped – we have to put it back to the people”). However, also stating that the Scottish National Party will everything in their power to make sure Scotland stays within the European Union, with or without Westminster (Ian Blackford, 2019, “Brexit must be stopped – we have to put it back to the people”).

Besides the criticism against the outcome of the Brexit referendum, the discussion motivates Scotland’s position and place among the other nations in the European community and the European Union. With independence, Stephen Gethins argues, Scotland have the opportunity to do this as well as making sure that Scotland’s voice will be heard, without Westminster there to do Scotland’s talking and the Scottish National Party will continue to work towards this reality (Gethins, 2019, “Standing up for Scotland’s place in Europe”). Nicola Sturgeon continues this argument, stating that ultimately Scotland deserves to make the choice on its self-determination and continued partnership with the European Union (Sturgeon, 2019, “Scotland can have a brighter future as an independent nation”). Sturgeon ends her article with the following statement:

“… it is time that Scotland had the choice of a brighter future as an independent nation able to chart our own future” (Sturgeon, 2019, “Scotland can have a brighter future as an independent nation”).

6.2.3. Short Summary
This second part of the analysis have focused on the political discourse produced in articles by the Scottish National Party or members of the party after the Brexit referendum on the discussion and debate surrounding Scotland as a nation as well as Scottish independence and its relation to the European Union and the international political community. The articles focus to a large extent on the aftermath and outcome of the Brexit referendum in 2016 in relation to Scotland and Scottish independence as well as Scotland’s relationship towards the European Union. But also, on the strong conviction of an independent Scotland and the strong sense of self-determination in relation to Westminster with the growing political rift between the two.
The articles express a clear disagreement towards Westminster rule and results of Brexit which ultimately forces Scotland to leave the European Union against Scotland’s will. The discourse is times highlights a strong sense of discontent towards the imposed decision making of Westminster against Scotland and the sense of being ignored on certain political matters. It focuses on highlighting the progress and success of the Scottish government as well as the Scottish National Party by providing examples of how their politics have protected or improved the conditions for the Scottish community and society, juxtaposed to the decision made by Westminster which are often described as less beneficial for the Scottish people.

6.3. The Question of the Future

This analysis has described and discussed the political discourse of the Scottish National Party, attempting to understand the construction of the idea of Scotland and the Scottish identity within material produced either by the party itself of members of the party between the Scottish independence referendum and the Brexit referendum. This last part of the analysis will compare and contrast the findings of the paper Scotland’s Future – Your Guide to an Independent Scotland and the collection of articles.

Beginning with how the thought of Scotland as a nation and the Scottish identity constructed in the material, the White Paper highly emphasised the importance of the deep and rich history of Scotland as a solid foundation on which the Scottish nation rests on. The large focus is on the ability of Scotland to create better opportunities for itself and the people of Scotland, but also the motivation to construct and promote a fairer, more solidary and welfare focused community that is progressive and seeks to expand its knowledge through cooperation with the international political community. Scotland is described as a more future focused nation with ambitions of creating something for itself and the people of Scotland instead of being restrained by decision making made elsewhere. Similarly to the White Paper, many of the articles highlights the idea of Scotland as a fairer country that continuously work towards a more progressive, solidary and better nation and have the ability to make better and fairer decisions for itself, juxtaposed the government of Westminster that according to the material often tend to create more roadblocks rather than solutions. The idea of Scotland seems to be constructed similarly in the material prior to the Scottish referendum as the articles published after the Brexit referendum. The
overall perception of the paper and articles is the notion of a strong and prosperous Scotland anchored in a deep connection to Scotland’s history and the Scottish culture permeates the Scottish community and seems to lay as a base for the construction of much of the Scottish society and spirit. For the Scottish National Party, the question of independence does not seem to be much of a question in reality, it simply means that the process of Scotland returning to its past sovereignty and self-determination is coming to an end and the Scottish community will once again make the decisions based on their own construction of what is best for the Scottish nation. However, there is also opposition and criticism towards Westminster rule over Scotland, which seems to have increased dramatically between the material before the independence referendum to after the Brexit referendum.

Moving on to how an independent Scotland is motivated and how Scotland is placed in relation to the European Union, the discourse starts to change. In the first piece of material, the seriousness of the coming referendum on independence and its significance to Scotland and its citizens was emphasized, the optimistic perspective on Scotland’s future as filled with great opportunities of an independent nation was apparent. The White paper motivates and emphasizes the Scottish independence with the importance of regaining the opportunity of self-determination based on Scottish values and opinions, something that Scotland had prior to the union with England in 1707. However, the growing disagreement between Scottish politics and Westminster rule signifies a larger issue that ultimately excels the importance of independence for Scotland. Comparing this towards the discourse of the articles written after the Brexit referendum, is a significant different story. In the first piece of material, Scotland’s Future – Your Guide to an Independent Scotland, it is clear that the concern of being forced to leave the European Union against Scotland and the Scottish people’s will, was already an issue on the horizon. As was already alarmed for in Scotland’s Future – Your Guide to an Independent Scotland, the articles written by the Scottish National Party and some of its members depicts a much more critical discourse as Scotland was now faced with the reality of being forced out of the European Union against the Scottish peoples will. The issue of Brexit that was once only a far away risk had now become a harsh truth of what the Scottish political community had argued for some time, that unfortunately the Scottish citizens opinions and wishes would not be honoured on the national level of the United Kingdom despite the promises made by the Westminster government prior to the independence referendum. The discourse regarding the Scottish nation have become progressively more critical and polarized on the issue of Brexit.
and the obstacles it has created for the Scottish nations self-determination. However, the White Paper and the articles had one common theme between themselves, the future of Scotland.

A question that was not originally included in this thesis, but instead grew during the analysis, is the question of the future. Throughout the research of this thesis and the analysis of the White paper and the articles, one word has constantly been at the centre of the discussion on Scottish independence and nationhood, the word future. The discussion on Scotland’s future was as centred as the importance of independence both within the White Paper but also the majority of the articles. Future seems to be a common ground on which the different debates on nation and independence were discussed on, however, the meaning of the future changed dramatically in the process of the debate. The two perspectives of the future in the pre independence referendum debate and the post Brexit referendum debate, are drastically different. Naturally the Brexit referendum changed the political debate of the United Kingdom on many levels, not necessarily just the debate on Scottish independence. But the future of the Scottish nation and community in 2013 emphasized the great optimistic future with a Scotland filled with opportunities and the belief in constructing a better future as community. On the other hand, the future of post Brexit Scotland was substantially more pessimistic with strong criticism and disappointment of Westminster rule. The future of Scotland was at stake, with the ultimatum of either an independent and free Scotland, or disaster. This illustrates the short-sightedness of politics, naturally time travel and seeing into the future is impossible, but politics in its on way is a constantly changeable phenomena that never really stops spinning. For Scotland as a nation, the continued debate on independence and the growing divergent paths between Scotland and Westminster seems to indicate that a second chance on the choice of independence might not be too far into the future, and one can be certain that the Scottish National Party will stand at the frontline of this event.
7. Conclusion

This thesis set out to better understand the construction of the ideas on the Scottish nation and independence in relation to the political discourse of the Scottish National Party focusing on the debate surrounding the Scottish independence referendum and the Brexit referendum. The thesis used material produced by the Scottish National Party from both the independence referendum and the Brexit referendum and compared and analysed the discourse in relation to the operational question presented. The thesis found that the strong historic and cultural foundation and the conviction of a sovereign and independent Scotland is a substantial strong core within the Scottish government’s and the Scottish National Party’s arguments for Scotland and the Scottish society in their perspective of what the community of Scotland is and needs. The imagined community of Scotland is a community based on a rich and resilient society that have continued to grow and build a community based on the interactions and values between the Scottish people, despite disagreements with the government of Westminster. Along with these findings, this thesis also found that the discourse had changed significantly between the two different materials.

As explained in the early parts of this thesis, the main focus of this thesis is on the ideas of the Scottish nation and identity and how these have been constructed as well as changed over the years through the eyes of the Scottish National Party and its members. Naturally, this does not bring the entire spectrum of political opinions within Scottish politics into the light in this thesis, but it does illuminate the discourse and values of the party that have had the most influence on Scottish politics over the past 15 years. The outcome of this thesis can therefore not be considered to be representative of the entire spectrum of Scottish politics and all of the active Scottish parties. But it does provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of ideas surrounding nationhood and independence within Scottish politics. For future studies, it would be very interesting to expand this thesis into a more comprehensive study on the diverse discourse between the parties within Scottish politics, which in return could illuminate further along the line of how people construct and perceive the idea of Scotland as a nation but with the different political discourse and perspectives of all of the active parties in the Scottish parliament.
8. Bibliography


