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Exploring Sovereignty in Scotland

DAVID MCCRONE AND MICHAEL KEATING

Abstract

It is often said that sovereignty is ever less meaningful in the modern world. Yet, sovereignty claims continue to proliferate. There are two elements: the subject of self-determination (sovereignty) claims and the object. Scottish independence and Brexit are two examples, yet they differ in important ways. Brexit postulates that the British people are the subject and complete sovereignty is the object. The Scottish independence movement claims the Scottish people is the subject but now places the object (independence) in a European context of shared sovereignty. Analysis of questions placed in the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (2021) shows that, in spite of Scottish politics being polarised around the issue of independence vs. union, voters show flexibility about what each of these actually means.

Keywords: Scotland, Brexit, sovereignty, independence, self-determination

SINCE 2014, the UK has experienced two referendums on the issue of sovereignty. The first, in 2014, asked people in Scotland whether Scotland should be an independent country. The second, in 2016, asked if the people of the United Kingdom should remain in or leave the European Union. The campaign to leave was explicitly fought on restoring national sovereignty supposedly lost to the EU. In June 2022 Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced that there would be to be a second Scottish independence referendum on 19 October 2023. The core justification for staging another independence referendum was that Scotland (a self-determining nation) had been taken out of the European Union against the will of its people, who had voted by 62 per cent to remain. Scotland had the right to leave one union and join another. The UK government insisted that the self-determining 'British people' had voted for Brexit and so there was no case for a second independence referendum.

Legal and political scholars have taken issue with simplistic conceptions of sovereignty and self-determination and sought to move the issue on. Yet, sovereignty claims and issues of national self-determination seem more important than ever. The two referendums served to realign political cleavages along the sovereignty dimension in a manner that has persisted.

Theoretical and conceptual debates about sovereignty have co-existed with surveys of

citizen preferences and attitudes, but they have not often been brought together. In this article, we explore these approaches and the ways in which sovereignty might be defined in the case of Scotland, in relation to independence and the European Union. We then use data from questions we put in the 2021 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey to explore how Scottish voters approach the question. This allows us to identify different groups of voters, beyond the simple nationalist-unionist dichotomy. In spite of the polarisation of attitudes around the independence question, citizens' attitudes towards sovereignty are as complex as the theoretical debates around the matter.

Sovereignty as a contested concept

Sovereignty is closely associated with the idea of self-determination, in which there are two elements. One is the subject, whether it be called a nation, a people, *demos* or another term. The other is the object, classically an independent state. Neither has ever been resolved in Scotland. The argument goes back to the nature of the Union itself. On the one hand, legal scholars like A. V. Dicey have argued that the Westminster Parliament is axiomatically sovereign and omnicompetent.¹ Contrarily, it has been argued that the Union

¹A. V. Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*, London, Macmillan, 1959.

of 1707 could not have created a sovereign Parliament, since the old Scottish Parliament did not claim sovereignty in the way the English one had; an idea upheld in the famous *obiter dictum* in the Court of Session by Lord Cooper.² Neil MacCormick linked this ‘Scottish’ concept of sovereignty to modern developments, notably membership of the European Union, to elaborate a theory of ‘post-sovereignty’.³ Self-determination can take many forms, from total independence, through various forms of association, to federalism or devolution.⁴ Other legal scholars and even judges (in their academic writings and speaking *obiter*) have concurred that the classic Westminster doctrine needs to be re-examined.⁵ Legal scholars more widely have argued that sovereignty should not be seen as an absolute thing, which an entity does or does not have, but as a set of relationships and claims.⁶ The UK Supreme Court, however, has declined to follow suit. Instead, it has clung to the doctrine that the devolved legislatures are the creatures of Westminster statute, with no inherent powers derived from the concept of the UK as a union of nations or from their democratic basis.⁷

In contrast to other state leaders facing self-determination claims, the UK political parties and Prime Ministers such as Margaret Thatcher and John Major have never denied that Scotland has the right to independence.⁸ David Cameron allowed an independence

referendum. In 1989, the Scottish Constitutional Convention, including the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green parties, issued a Claim of Right insisting on ‘the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs.’⁹ Yet, the *Scotland Act* of the Labour Government in 1998 (establishing the Scottish Parliament) insisted that sovereignty remained at Westminster. Tony Blair, in a Diceyan moment, even claimed that ‘sovereignty remains with me as an English MP.’¹⁰ In 2012, the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties in the Scottish Parliament reaffirmed the 1989 Claim of Right which ‘acknowledges the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs.’¹¹ The Conservatives voted against on the grounds that the only right the Scots had was to leave the UK, not to decide on their terms of continuing membership. By 2018, a motion presented in the House of Commons recognising that the Claim of Right of 1988 was accepted by all parties.¹² The unionist parties argued that the Scottish people had settled this issue in the referendums of 1997 and 2014.

It is not only the subject of self-determination that is at stake, but also the object. The question posed in the 2014 referendum may have been clear, but its meaning was open to interpretation. The Yes campaign insisted that Scotland would remain in the monarchical, defence, European, currency and social unions, while withdrawing from the political one. This ‘independence-lite’ is more akin to the post-sovereigntist than the classic sovereigntist argument. For its part, the No side changed its position during the campaign to declare that a victory for their side would count as support for ‘devolution-

²Lord President Cooper, *MacCormick v. Lord Advocate* (1953) SC 396—Court of Session (on appeal).

³N. MacCormick, *Questioning Sovereignty. Law, State and Nation in the European Commonwealth*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999; M. Keating, *Plurinational Democracy. Stateless Nations in a Post-Sovereignty Era*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.

⁴M. Herrero de Miñón, *Derechos Históricos y Constitución*, Madrid, Taurus, 1998.

⁵Lord Steyn, *House of Lords Judgements—Jackson and others (appellants) v. Her Majesty’s Attorney General (respondent)*, UKHL 56, 2005; M. Arden, *Common Law and Modern Society*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015.

⁶M. Loughlin, ‘Ten tenets of sovereignty’, in N. Walker, ed., *Sovereignty in Transition*, Oxford, Hart, 2003.

⁷*London Review of Books*, vol. 44, no. 2, 27 January, 2022.

⁸M. Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, London, HarperCollins, 1993; J. Major, ‘Foreword by the Prime Minister’, in Secretary of State for Scotland, *Scotland in the Union: A Partnership for Good* Edinburgh, HMSO, 1993.

⁹O. Dudley Edwards, ed., *A Claim of Right for Scotland*, Edinburgh, Polygon, 1998.

¹⁰S. Brogan, ‘Blair has trouble with his kilt’, *The Independent*, 5 April 1997.

¹¹Scottish Parliament Official Report, 26 January 2012.

¹²Hansard, Vol. 644, 4 July 2018; <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2018-0171/>

max' rather than the status quo. Both sides were appealing to the longstanding evidence that the largest section of Scottish opinion remained in the middle, supporting Home Rule (devolution) within the United Kingdom and not seeing the issue of sovereignty as one of absolutes.

Critics of the Scottish National Party (SNP) have argued that independence in Europe is a contradiction, since it at once asserts Scottish sovereignty and surrenders it to the EU.¹³ Brexiters argued that membership of the EU was incompatible with the (uncodified) constitution of the United Kingdom, resting as did on the absolute sovereignty of the Westminster Parliament. Yet, in the alternative, post-sovereigntist perspective, UK membership of the European Union and devolution within the UK are complementary processes of spatial rescaling and sharing both governmental responsibilities and sovereignty itself.¹⁴

Matters have been aggravated since the Brexit vote by a reassertion of the internal supremacy of the Westminster Parliament over the devolved institutions of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in order to make its external sovereignty effective. Measures such as the 2020 *United Kingdom Internal Market Act* have undermined the regulatory capacity of the devolved governments after Brexit. The Sewel Convention, whereby Westminster would not 'normally' legislate in devolved matters without the consent of the devolved legislatures, has systematically been set aside, with the Supreme Court dismissing it as a mere 'political' convention, ignoring the fact the conventions are the bedrock of the UK's uncodified constitution. It was not surprising that all three devolved legislatures refused to give legislative consent to the EU Withdrawal Agreement Bill, albeit without any effect.

Membership of both unions was reaffirmed by majorities of the Scottish people in 2014, when the understanding was that the UK would remain within the EU, and in 2016, when 62 per cent of Scottish voters opted for Remain. This, however, would be to over-

simplify matters as the relationship between the two questions was never clear-cut. Although the case for independence was linked to Scotland being part of the EU, nearly one-third of 2014 Yes (to independence) voters then voted Leave in 2016. At the same time, substantial majorities of both Yes and No voters from 2014 opted for Remain.¹⁵

This presents a complex field, which defies simple questions. There are those who support Scottish independence outside the EU, which implies a simple concept of national sovereignty. On the other side are those who support the present UK government position that the United Kingdom is a unitary (albeit decentralised) state outside the EU, with no right to secession. Yet, this leaves the large number who support independence and membership of the European Union. Matters become even more complex when we dig deeper into the symbolic and substantive meanings of sovereignty and control. While political competition in Scotland has, in recent years, become more polarised between the independence-supporting SNP and the hard-unionist Conservatives, other parties (including Labour) and groups continue to explore the possibilities of middle-ground solutions.

Getting at sovereignty

In an earlier article in *The Political Quarterly*, we began to explore Scottish attitudes to sovereignty in relation to the United Kingdom (sovereignty1) and to the European Union (sovereignty2), based on two questions in the British Election Study of 2019.¹⁶ This current article draws on a larger survey conducted as part of the Scottish Social Attitudes survey (2021) to explore the deeper complexities of opinion on sovereignty. As before, we are conscious that sovereignty is a legal and political concept and not naturally part of the vocabulary of citizens. We therefore need proxy terms

¹⁵C. Prosser and E. Fieldhouse, 'A tale of two referendums—the 2017 election in Scotland', *British Election Study*, 2017; <http://www.britishelectionstudy.com/bes-findings/a-tale-of-two-referendums-the-2017-election-in-scotland/#.WeoCaDb9O7M/>

¹⁶D. McCrone and M. Keating, 'Questions of sovereignty: redefining politics in Scotland?', *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 92, no. 1, 2021, pp. 14–22.

¹³D. Robinson, *Natural and Necessary Unions: Britain, Europe, and the Scottish Question*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021.

¹⁴M. Keating, *State and Nation in the United Kingdom: The Fractured Union*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021.

and measures that have a more immediate meaning.

Scottish politics has increasingly polarised between supporters of independence and union. This is clear from evidence of tactical voting by unionists on constitutional grounds, which seems to have replaced tactical voting by left-inclined voters on left-right grounds, and by patterns of vote transfer under the single transferable vote system in local elections. We are conscious that any attempt to divide voters into ‘nationalists’ and ‘unionists’ would beg the question we are trying to examine. It would obscure the complex combination of attitudes that are evidently present. We therefore need to devise terms and questions that have meaning to voters, chosen as proxies for the larger sovereignty issue.

In the first survey, based on the British Election Survey (BES) in 2019, we asked whether Scots see themselves as a self-determining people. Our two measures tested the case that Scots should decide on their constitutional future and that they should not be taken out of the EU against their will. Specifically, we asked whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the two propositions, that:

People in Scotland should have the ultimate right to decide for themselves how they should be governed. (hereafter, ‘sovereignty1’)

and

Because a majority of people in the UK voted to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum, people in Scotland should accept that decision (‘sovereignty2’)

The responses to these questions were as follows:

Note that on sovereignty1, those who took the position outnumbered those who dissented from it by more than three to one. On sovereignty2, the proportions strongly disagree/disagree to strongly agree/agree were virtually even, 43 per cent to 41 per cent. Combining the two variables, ‘sovereignists’ were defined as those who ‘agreed’, strongly or otherwise, with the first proposition (sovereignty1), as well as those who ‘disagreed’, strongly or otherwise, with the second (sovereignty2). They represented 41 per cent of the sample (N = 1065). Unionists, defined as those who rejected Scottish sovereignty on both dimensions, were 15 per cent (N = 388) of the

sample. A further 16 per cent (N = 414) were ‘semi-sovereignists’, that is, while in favour of Scottish self-government, they ceded legitimacy to the UK on the Brexit issue. Our analysis of the 2019 survey data showed that:

- *sovereignists* were strongly Scottish in their national identity, on the left, were SNP supporters, dissatisfied with UK democracy, and voted Yes in the Scottish independence referendum in 2014;
- *unionists* were more likely to say they were British, voted Conservative, were satisfied with UK democracy, and to have voted Leave in 2016 and No in the 2014 independence referendum;
- *semi-sovereignists* were defined largely by their views on Brexit, were satisfied with how British democracy operates and described themselves as British.

In the Scottish Social Attitudes survey 2021, we replicated those questions, thus ruling out contextual effects such as the fact that the survey took place in the context of the British general election of 2019, as well as being able to extend the measures of sovereignty with a set of new questions.

Dimensions of sovereignty

The 2021 survey questions broadened the measures of sovereignty with regard to five dimensions:

People in Scotland should have the ultimate right to decide for themselves how they should be governed.

and

Because a majority of people in the UK voted to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum, people in Scotland should accept that decision.

and

Who should have the right to decide whether or not Scotland has another referendum on Scottish independence?, with options:

- *Only the UK Parliament*
- *Only the Scottish Parliament*
- *Both UK and Scottish Parliaments together.*

These all get at the same underlying question, although the second implies that Scotland should remain in a union in which it shares power. This allows us to test the Scottish government claim that Brexit without Scottish consent is a violation of understandings of the union, to the modern, complex view of sovereignty, with one union being replaced by another.

The second dimension concerns sovereignty as the right to make concrete decisions. What we are trying to get at is what Germans call *Kompetenz-Kompetenz*, that is, the right to decide who does what. The closest we can get in practice is to ask about who should be responsible for particular matters, including the option of shared responsibility. Two salient and contested issues were chosen, taxes and benefits. The questions were:

Which of the statements below comes closest to your view about:

- (a) *who should make government decisions about Scotland;*
- (b) *who should make decisions about taxes in Scotland;*
- (c) *who should make decisions about welfare benefits in Scotland*

Each of these offered the following options:

All decisions should be made by the Scottish government

All decisions should be made by the UK government

*All decisions should be made **jointly** by the Scottish and UK governments*

Decisions about some things should be made by the Scottish government while decisions about other things should be made by the UK government

The next set of questions concerns responsibility for decisions after Brexit. Agriculture is a matter previously devolved to Scotland, with the policy set by the EU. The UK government initially argued that such responsibilities should revert to Westminster, which could decide which parts to devolve. It later retreated on this in practice, while not conceding the principle that Westminster should decide on the balance of responsibilities. The question was:

Now that Britain has left the EU, who do you think should make decisions about farming in Scotland?, with options:

- *all decisions made by Scottish government;*
- *some decisions by Scottish government, some by UK government;*
- *all decisions by UK government.*

Freedom of movement is another matter of contention. All parties in the Scottish Parliament have supported a liberal immigration policy, including free movement within the EU. Stopping this was a key demand of the pro-Brexit side. The UK government has insisted that this is an inherent responsibility of the sovereign state. The question was:

Which of the following statements comes closer to your view about immigration now that Britain has left the EU? with options:

- *The rules on immigration from the EU should be the same in Scotland as they are in England and Wales;*
- *The rules on immigration from the EU should make it easier for someone from the EU to come to live in Scotland than in England and Wales;*
- *The rules on immigration from the EU should make it harder for someone from the EU to come to live in Scotland than in England and Wales.*

A fourth dimension concerns the UK government's strategy of combatting nationalism by re-entering policy fields devolved to the Scottish Parliament. We asked:

Assuming Scotland was still part of the UK, do you think the UK government should or should not be able to spend money in Scotland on things like schools, hospitals and roads that are usually decided by the Scottish government? (using a four-item likert scale ranging from, 'definitely should/probably should/probably should not/definitely should not'.)

and

Assuming Scotland was still part of the UK, do you think the UK Parliament should or should not be able to make laws for Scotland on matters like education, health and transport that are usually decided by the Scottish Parliament?

The fifth and final dimension concerns the concrete meaning of independence. The questions touched on the issues of currency and defence, central to classic ideas of sovereignty. They were:

If Scotland were to become an independent country, outwith the United Kingdom, do you think it should have its own currency or should it share the same currency as the rest of the UK?

And do you think it should have its own armed forces or should it share armed forces with the rest of the UK?

We had available to us, through the Scottish Social Attitudes survey, a range of social and demographic variables, including measures of territorial identity to get at Scottish identity, British identity and European identity.

2021 survey results

We can thus identify ‘Scottish sovereigntists’ (‘people in Scotland have the right to decide how they are governed’), and unionists (British sovereigntists) based on responses to ‘Because a majority of people in the UK voted Leave, people in Scotland should accept that’.¹⁷ See Table 1 for 2019 marginals. The marginals in the 2021 survey are as follows (see Table 2):

‘Scottish sovereigntists’ are once again defined as those who agree/strongly agree on sovereignty1 (58 per cent) and those who disagree/strongly disagree on sovereignty2 (39 per cent). Cross-tabulating these variables, and combining ‘strongly/agree’, and so on, we find (see Table 3):

The largest proportion in the sample, 30 per cent are ‘Scottish sovereigntists’, those who agree that people in Scotland have the right to decide, and who disagree that the Brexit result should be accepted.

‘British unionists’, those rejecting Scots’ right of self-determination, and who agree that they should accept Brexit, represent 10 per cent. If we exclude ‘neither’ in these calculations (15 per cent of the sample), ‘Scottish sovereigntists’ rise to 40 per cent, and ‘unionists’ to 13 per cent. These results are broadly comparable to our previous findings derived from BES 2019, where the proportions were 40 per cent, and 18 per cent, respectively.

Our focus here is on those new measures included in the 2021 survey cross-tabulated by the three constitutional types which we developed in the previous 2019 survey.

¹⁷This replaces our earlier term ‘sovereigntists’ in order to give greater precision.

Table 1: Attitudes to Sovereignty, 2019

% by column	Sovereignty1	Sovereignty2
Strongly disagree	7	25
Disagree	10	18
Neither disagree nor agree	18	10
Agree	22	18
Strongly agree	38	23
DK/NA	5	6
N	2791	2791

Table 2: Distributions on measures of sovereignty, 2021 (2019 in brackets)

% by column	Sovereignty 1	Sovereignty 2
Strongly disagree	20 (7)	28 (25)
Disagree	8 (10)	18 (18)
Neither	14 (18)	15 (10)
Agree	24 (22)	21 (18)
Strongly agree	34 (38)	18 (23)
DK/NA	<1 (5)	<1 (6)
N	1365 (2791)	1365 (2791)

Note: 2019 distributions are included in this table to make comparison with 2021 easier.

(In Table 4 and following, SG = Scottish Government, UKG = UK Government, SP=Scottish Parliament, and UKP=UK Parliament, and rUK = rest of UK).

The responses to the first question might seem tautological but, while Scottish sovereigntists are supporting an abstract principle, this question addresses a concrete and current question. It is interesting that only four in five Scottish sovereigntists take this step and that as many as 16 per cent of unionists also do so. Responses to the other questions show considerable crossover of views, pointing to a more complex view of sovereignty. Among Scottish sovereigntists:

- As many as 54 per cent accept sharing a currency with the remaining UK (rUK) post-independence (46 per cent want a Scottish currency);
- 41 per cent accept sharing armed forces with rUK (58 per cent want Scotland to have its own armed forces);

Table 3: Sovereignty1 by Sovereignty2, 2021 (2019 in brackets)

% of total	Sovereignty2	disagree	neither	Agree	% total
Sovereignty1					
Disagree		15 (3)	3 (1)	10 (15)	28 (19)
Neither		2 (2)	5 (5)	8 (12)	14 (12)
agree		30 (41)	7 (5)	21 (16)	58 (16)
% total		46 (46)	15 (11)	39 (43)	100%
N = 1359 (N = 2577)					

Table 4: Sovereignty measures by constitutional type

% within each type	All (N = 1352)	Scottish sovereignists (N = 409)	Semi- sovereignists (N = 288)	British Unionists (N = 133)
Only SP has right to decide ScIndyRef2	49%	78%	42%	16%
All taxes to be decided by SG	57%	86%	46%	19%
All welfare benefits by SG	62%	89%	54%	19%
SG to make all farming decisions	62%	89%	48%	22%
Immigration rules same as rUK	52%	31%	66%	83%
UKG spending in Scotland	59%	43%	63%	78%
UKP law-making for Scotland	34%	16%	38%	68%
Own currency post-independence	31%	46%	25%	18%
Own armed forces post-independence	42%	58%	30%	27%

- 43 per cent of Scottish sovereignists accept UK spending in Scotland in areas usually decided by Scottish government (such as schools, roads and hospitals).
- On immigration, 31 per cent (almost a third) think the rules should be same in Scotland as rUK in context of independence.

Among British unionists, similarly, we also find crossovers:

- On taxes, only 36 per cent think the UK should decide all taxes; with 19 per cent that all taxes should be decided by Scottish government (SG). A further 32 per cent of unionists think that some taxes should be decided by UKG and some by SG, while a further 13 per cent that they should be decided jointly;
- On welfare benefits, only 30 per cent of unionists think that all benefits should be decided by UKG, with 19 per cent of unionists that they should all be decided by SG, 29 per cent jointly (by UKG and SG together), and 23 per cent that some should be decided by SG, and others by UKG);

- On who should have right to decide on a second independence referendum, 30 per cent of unionists believed it should be made by both UKP and SP together, and only a bare majority (54 per cent) by UKP alone;
- One-third of unionists think that the UK Parliament should not make laws in devolved fields, although the UK government sees this as a key principle of its new unionism.

The findings show that, even on the polar positions of Scottish sovereignists and British unionists, there is considerable nuance and complexity, such that the former are willing to accept sharing with the UK, even post-independence, while unionists accede that many decisions should be the responsibility of the Scottish level of government. Unsurprisingly, semi-sovereignists are more likely to be in favour of shared decision making, but it is the fact that among Scottish sovereignists and British unionists there is considerable support for either sharing or that the 'other government' should make key decisions which is most striking.

To what extent do our new measures of sovereignty account for our three constitutional types? We used the Wald scores in binary logistic regression to determine whether these had more predictive power to account for each type. The strongest variables in defining a Scottish sovereigntist are: believing that Scotland should be independent in the European Union, that farming decisions should be made by Scottish government, voting Remain in the Brexit referendum of 2016, that immigration from the EU should be made easier, and to a less significant effect that Scotland should have its own currency post-independence.

As for semi-sovereigntists, there are two stand-out factors: attitudes to an independent Scotland in the EU and the right to decide ScIndyRef2. Somewhat less significant are how they voted in the 2019 British election, and a greater propensity to 'be British' co-equally with being Scottish. Views on currency (sharing sterling) falls just short of significance.

For British unionists, the two strongest factors are: who should make farming decisions post-EU (both SG and UKG, or failing that, UKG), as well as the belief that an independent Scotland should *not* be in the EU. They are more likely to emphasise 'British' as their national identity while not denying being Scottish; and of lesser significance, that Scottish government should make all decisions, and being on the right of the political spectrum.

Discussion

All of our new measures of sovereignty proved to be statistically significant in the sense that they are strongly associated with whether you are a Scottish sovereigntist, a British unionist or a semi-sovereigntist. In the appendix, we provide a table of statistical associations for all the variables in the 2021 survey. Thus, Scottish sovereigntists are far more likely to:

- support an Independent Scotland in the EU (65 per cent);
- believe Scottish government should make all decisions (79 per cent);
- have the right to decide on ScIndyRef2 (79 per cent);
- prefer that decisions about farming are made by Scottish government (89 per cent);

- and believe that immigration to Scotland should be 'easier' (62 per cent).

Scottish sovereigntists are less certain about a currency in an independent state, splitting 46 per cent in favour of a separate currency, while 54 per cent that it should be shared with the former UK.

British unionists, on the other hand,

- reject the notion of an independent Scotland in the EU (53 per cent);
- argue that only UK government should permit a second Scottish independence referendum (54 per cent);
- think that in the event of Scottish independence, currency should be shared with the former UK (89 per cent) and that immigration rules should be the same as rUK (83 per cent);
- and that farming post-Brexit should be a matter shared between Scottish and UK governments (51 per cent), or else taken by UK government alone (27 per cent).

Semi-sovereigntists sit more or less evenly between 'sovereigntists' and 'unionists' on measures of sovereignty. Bearing in mind that they are willing to accept a Scottish right to govern, but *not* to dissent from a pan-UK Brexit decision, they are more inclined to downplay 'being European', and are evenly split on thinking that an independent Scotland should be a member of the European Union.

Even a policy area as specific as farming policy post-Brexit is strongly associated with views on sovereignty, but this too is framed by the shift from policy made by the EU, as is the view that rules on immigration from the EU ought to be under the control of the Scottish government. It seems that 'Europe' provides the key framework for imagining sovereignty. Finally, a commitment to a shared currency (54 per cent of Scottish sovereigntists are in favour of sharing a currency with the UK), which seems like a violation of one of the traditional defining features of the sovereign state.

We defined 'Scottish sovereignty' as having two dimensions: the belief that people in Scotland should be able to decide their own government *and* that they have the right to dissociate Scotland from the UK Brexit vote in 2016. When modelled separately, the latter

was a more powerful determinant of being sovereigntist than agreeing with a Scottish right of self-determination, which is a view which a substantial proportion of non-sovereigntists share. In other words, being a Scottish sovereigntist involves recognising that power is shared, with the European Union, rather than the UK, the British Union; and thus we might conclude that they are European unionists rather than British unionists. Scottish sovereigntists are clear on the *subject* of self-determination, but flexible on the *object*, closer to modern academic understandings of sovereignty and to the post-sovereignty position than to the classical view.

Similarly, being a British unionist on our measures does not imply accepting a unitary British state in which Westminster and Whitehall make all the key decisions. In

undoubtedly what will be a heated debate when, and if, a second Scottish independence referendum takes place on 19 October 2023, the terms will be set by the nuances of 'sovereignty' and 'union' as it operates in the real, modern, world.

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Appendix A

Summary of variable associations (significance levels)

Associational significance: chi-squared (χ^2)	Scottish sovereigntists	Semi-sovereigntists	British unionists
<i>Demography</i>			
Sex			
Age	**		***
Education	**	*	
N-S Sec	**	**	**
Class Identity			*
Income			
<i>Territorial Identity</i>			
Sc Id (Moreno)	***	***	***
Sc Id 7 pt scale	***		***
Br Id 7 pts	***	***	***
Eur Id 7 pts	***	***	***
<i>Social Values</i>			
Lib-Authn	***	**	***
Left-Right	***		***
<i>Politics</i>			
Vote in BGE2019	***	***	***
Brexit vote in 2016	***	***	**
ScIndyRef2014 vote	***	**	***
Party Identification	***	***	***
Interest in politics	**	**	*
Who decides ScIndRef2?	***	***	***
Independent Sc in EU?	***	***	***
SG to make all decisions	***	***	***
<i>Who should have responsibility?</i>			
Tax decisions	***	***	***
Welfare decisions	***	***	***
UKG spend in Sc	***	***	***
UKG makes law for Sc	***	***	***
Farming decisions	***	***	***
Immigration from EU	***	***	***
<i>Questions of Independence</i>			
Currency	***	***	***
Armed Forces	***	***	***

Note: *** significant at .001 level; ** significant at .01 level; *significant at .05 level.