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# Unions of the Mind: The United Kingdom as a subjective state

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**Abstract:** Those seeking to understand attitudes to decentralization focus on attitudes to constitutional change or to the ideal level of government to control particular areas of jurisdiction. Within this is a wider approach to understanding subjective dimensions of multi-level states and the different communities of interest or polities that exist within them. Drawing on data from successive rounds of the Future of England (including parallel surveys in Scotland and Wales) this article develops a conceptual framework through which to understand political unions as well as a multi-dimensional measure through which to evaluate the location of unions from a scale that runs from subjective unionism to subjective autonomism. It outlines the various unions of the mind, including an identity union, a union of economic solidarity, of social solidarity and of fairness (or legitimacy) and then proceeds to map these within the United Kingdom. It then evaluates what impact each of these has on attitudes to the wider state, including attitudes to its continued survival. The article draws primarily on individual-level survey data collected by the authors but refers also to campaigns for constitutional change in unions and relates this to what we know about how individuals conceive of the states in which they live.

**Keywords:** unionism, decentralisation, identity, grievance, United Kingdom

## Unions of the Mind: The United Kingdom as a subjective state

When the Scottish Government published its prospectus for a Yes vote in the 2014 independence referendum, it made clear that it viewed the relationship between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as a series of 'unions' only one of which – 'the current parliamentary union...which gives Westminster its authority over Scotland' – it was seeking a mandate to dissolve (Scottish Government 2013: 214). Five other unions, it claimed, would remain even if it gained the mandate which it sought: an economic union based on joint membership of the EU; a Union of the Crowns with the Queen retaining her role as head of state both north and south of the Scottish border; a monetary union through shared use of sterling and the Bank of England; a defence union as a result of membership in NATO; and a social union 'made up of connections of family, history, culture and language' (Scottish Government 2013: 215).<sup>1</sup>

Clearly there are some Scotland-specific elements to this formulation, for example in the reference to the Union of Crowns which in 1603 united the until-then-separate kingships of Scotland and England in the person of the same monarch. Nonetheless, the debate over Scottish independence serves to raise in particularly striking form the question of the nature of the 'ties that bind' (or not, as the case may be) states together. For as the UK example underlines, these ties clearly cannot be reduced to any particular internal configuration of legal-constitutional structures or practices. After all, this is a state that has never formed a religious or legal union given the existence of different church-state relationships and legal systems on both sides of the England-Scotland border.

Not only that, but there is a subjective dimension of belonging that is simply not captured by focusing on particular institutional aspects of statehood: just as states exist as institutional and legal structures, so too do they exist, we would argue, as 'unions of the mind'. They are

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<sup>1</sup> It is also important to note that this vision of surviving unions was contested. The United Kingdom government was adamantly opposed to the idea of a post-independence monetary union and argued that independence would inevitably divide the social union. It likewise raised doubts as to how receptive both NATO and the EU would prove to be to Scottish applications for membership.

communities of subjective belonging, akin to Renan's depiction of nations constructed by 'daily plebiscite' (Renan 1882 (1996): 53). In other words, a nation's members must routinely wish themselves to be part of that collective for it to exist. Yet given the sheer variety of states (from micro-states to continent-spanning superpowers), of state-forms (from highly centralised, unitary polities to the substantially decentralised), of organising principles (liberal democratic, theocratic, socialist, authoritarian, etc.), let alone the variety of ethnic, linguistic, national and religious compositions readily observable across the state system, it is reasonable to expect that any understanding of the state as a subjective community will also vary considerably both between and, indeed, within different states.

In this article we set out to explore for the first time what we have termed 'unions of the mind', namely the subjective understandings of the state as a union of constituent parts. Our task is related to but different from that pursued in other large and well-established literatures, including those focusing on degrees of decentralisation found within or on the extent of diversity that characterises different states. As such, it may be useful to clarify our aims with reference to these other endeavours.

Efforts by social scientists to measure either how decentralized or how diverse states are have tended to focus on quantitative scores for structural features or aggregated demographic characteristics, using the size of regional budgets, regional legislative competence or the chances that two randomly selected people will be from the same ethnic group as a way to evaluate a spectrum running from centralised to decentralised, or homogeneous to heterogeneous. But while the objective features of decentralization (the location of executive or legislative competences, and size of budgets, for example) have received sustained attention, the subjective dimensions of decentralization are less well understood. We know whether people want particular policy competences to be decentralised and we know whether or not people feel closer to the region than they do to the state, but conceptual and empirical work on subjective decentralization is rather thin on the ground (for an exception see Henderson et al 2013). The subjective aspects of diversity, by contrast, are far more thoroughly researched, both in terms of the variety of approaches – including immigrant integration, ethnic conflict and nationalism, as well as social cohesion – but also in terms of the different dimensions associated with each. Our goal here is to

generate an equivalent multidimensional approach to *subjective unionism* and its opposite, what we have termed *subjective autonomism*, as a way of evaluating unions of the mind across and within states.

This exercise serves several purposes. Developing a better understanding of the attitudes of individuals towards the state in which they live, of course, requires no additional justification. But a multidimensional conceptualisation of states as unions of the mind allows us, potentially, to understand how these dimensions might relate to each other. It is not necessarily the case, for example, that those with greater levels of attachment to the state also feel a greater sense of grievance or injustice towards other parts of the state. Not all dimensions rise and lower as one. By identifying the different dimensions, we can therefore understand the wider dynamics within states and how they might – and when they might not – interact. Our exploration of subjective unionism (and its opposite) also offers a useful counterpoint to the literature seeking to measure degrees of (objective) decentralization. It can allow us to track the extent to which the degree of decentralisation that characterises the constitutional order of a given state aligns with the subjective unionism or autonomism found within that state or within a particular territory of that state. At a less generalised level, we can also drill down to explore how the specifics of multi-level policy competence align with subjective attitudes; if, for example, welfare policy in a given state is currently controlled by the territorial levels at which individuals feel the greater levels of social solidarity.<sup>2</sup> Our aim in what follows is not to pursue all of these various avenues of enquiry but rather to devise a measure that will prove useful beyond our immediate research interests.

It is also important to underline from the outset that we make no claims as to whether or not a strong sense of subjective unionism or, for that matter, autonomism is a good thing. Our primary goal here is conceptual and empirical rather than normative. We argue that unions exist in the minds of their inhabitants and use opinion data to show that these subjective constructs have an internal structure. Like Green et al (2009), who state that cohesion is neither good nor bad but should be measured, we note that states vary between the poles of subjective autonomism and subjective unionism. We use individuals as units of observation

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<sup>2</sup> This fits with a fiscal federalism literature that suggests decentralization of policy competences is preferable if public social preferences vary across constituent units (see, for example, Musgrave 1965, Oates 1968)

to create aggregate profiles for states or territories within them but we do not, in this paper at least, seek to conduct an individual-level analysis of predictors of unionism in the way that, for example, others explore how social positioning affects identity or social solidarity (Likki and Staerklé 2014). Our task here is rather to conceptualise and measure the subjective dimensions of states as unions.

We employ the term 'union' because all states possess internal boundaries, whether administrative, jurisdictional or ethnic and cultural. As Sam and Berry (2006) note, all states are culturally and ethnically plural. We would extend this to note that all states are, objectively, unions in that they are composed of constituent units varying from those in possession of considerable legislative competence or with borders that demarcate 'historic nations' to those that are administrative creations or units largely for the purposes of data collection (Wyn Jones and Scully 2010). They are not necessarily all understood in this way but citizens, however. Treating states as unions of their constituent parts allows us to explore the vertical and horizontal relations among those units and the extent to which they are characterised by a form of subjective unionism (for a similar focus on vertical and horizontal relations see also Strebel and Kübler, this volume).

We should also underline that by 'unionism' we are not referring to a political project opposed to independence or aligning it with the political goals of particular religious or cultural groups.<sup>3</sup> We are therefore stripping unionism of any UK-specific campaigning function and rather using it as a way to examine a spectrum of attitudes. We define unionism as feeling part of something larger, with that 'something larger' existing at a territorial scale greater than one's immediate political community, and autonomism referring to a territorial frame of reference for community that does not link from or extend beyond the more directly proximate scale to a greater 'whole'. This notion of parts of the whole is flexible. Our own interest is in subjective unionism/autonomism within states and specifically in the context of meso-level region-state dynamics but there is no reason why this framework could not be

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<sup>3</sup> Unionism as a term to signify attachment to the state and an opposition to regional self-determination through independence would appear to be a uniquely British concept (Kidd 2008). Other multi-national or federal states employ different terminology for opponents of regional independence such as federalist (Canada) or nationalist (Spain). We are aware obviously that the term also has certain religious connotations in some UK contexts, but again this is not the focus of our work.

employed to explore the extent to which individuals within states feel part of a larger supra-state union, or indeed how indeed those in different municipalities feel towards the wider meso-region.

The article proceeds as follows. First, we evaluate the state of the literature on topics related to subjective unionism, including social solidarity, social capital, ethnic diversity and integration, multiculturalism and social cohesion. We end this section with a discussion of the various efforts to measure such concepts, outlining the four dimensions of subjective unionism that constitute the various unions of the mind we would expect to find in any state:

- an identity union,
- a union of social solidarity,
- a union of economic solidarity, and
- a legitimate union

Second, we examine these dimensions within the United Kingdom as a case study. This allows us to determine whether the dimensions we have identified are reflected in the attitudes of respondents, the extent to which they have a coherent internal structure, and whether they relate to support for the continuation of the state.

## **Literature**

Measures of subjective unionism relate to efforts to evaluate both the decentralization and diversity of states. We can distinguish between efforts to evaluate the objective and subjective measures of each. Efforts to identify objective measures of decentralization have tended to focus on state structures. This includes policy competence of levels below the state, the size of their budgets or formal routes to influence central decision-making, resulting in sophisticated measures of self and shared rule (Hooghe et al 2006) as well as measures of fiscal (Martinez-Vazquez and Timofeev 2009), economic and political decentralization (Schneider 2003). Building on this, Dardanelli et al (2018) have sought to develop a measure of both static and dynamic decentralization. At the same time, efforts to measure objective levels of diversity within states have tended to focus on fractionalization (Alesina et al 2003, Fearon 2003, Patsiurko, Campbell and Hall 2011) which measures the probability that two randomly drawn individuals will share ethnic, linguistic or religious characteristics.

When we turn to subjective measures, however, the diversity literature is markedly more developed than the literature related to decentralization. This is not to say that multi-level issues have escaped the attentions of those working with attitudinal data, but efforts have typically dealt with possible dimensions in isolation (as in the case of attitudes to devolving policy competence, see various Role of Government surveys of the ISSP, or NatCen 2017) or as predictors (as in the case of national identity and its impact on solidarity, see Strath 2017, Sandelind 2018) rather than as indicators of a single multi-dimensional concept. The following offers an overview of those literatures most closely related to our current endeavour.

Even if the terminology we deploy may be unfamiliar, autonomism and unionism are, in one sense, a quintessential multi-level issue, although not restricted to federal states or to those with strong meso-level regions. The various multi-level literatures provide us with rich research on variations in national identities, regional political cultures, as well as multi-level sources of trust (Bauer et al 2018), perceptions of grievance (Jedwab 2018), satisfaction with democracy (Brown and Deem 2018) or the ideal distribution of legislative competence (Scheller 2018, Thijssen et al 2018, Greu 2018). Each explores how and why regions can serve as important political communities, inculcating in their populations distinct policy preferences or distinct senses of trust (Cutler 2008, Henderson 2010, Henderson and McEwen 2015, Bauer et al 2018).<sup>4</sup> In such an approach, regional distinctiveness can be seen as the by-product of institutional control over key agents of socialisation (Elkins and Simeon 1980), the territorial clustering of socio-economic or cultural traits that are related to wider approaches to political life (see Linz 1968 for a classic of the genre), or centre-periphery relations within particular states (Rokkan 1999, Solchanyk 1994, Muro and Quiroga 2004). Researchers have explored the way that regions can serve as primary political communities, with sub-state identities serving as meaningful predictors of political engagement in regional elections (Henderson and McEwen 2010, 2015) and of solidarity at different territorial levels (Miller 2000, Hollinger 2006, Brodie 2002, Hunt and Benford 2004, Henderson et al 2013,

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<sup>4</sup> Researchers on multi-level trust tend to identify the discrete levels as (i) individual and (ii) state treat states and individuals as discrete levels (Van der Meer and Dekker 2011) while others identify discrete territorial levels within the state (eg state, meso-level/regional and local).



Minkoff 1997). Identity and perceptions of solidarity, for example, *can* covary, with those most attached to the more proximate territorial groups demonstrating a stronger sense of social solidarity with that group, but there is nothing automatic about this. Strong regional identities do not necessarily undermine state-wide solidarity (Jedwab and Kincaid 2018). For the most part, however, these works tend to treat decentralization, or specific multi-level governance arrangements, as an independent variable with potential attitudinal implications for the state. This includes how people feel about the state – whether they feel close to it, whether they feel a sense of attachment to those in other parts – but identity is rarely conceptualised as part of a wider framework of subjective autonomism or unionism within that state, with each dimension serving as discrete parts of a wider whole. We see research on identity and grievance (Jedwab 2018), identity and attitudes to decentralization (Scheller 2018) but rarely a multi-dimensional effort to integrate these different concepts into a cohesive whole.

In a partial exception to this, efforts to identify whether certain federal states are characterised by a federal political culture help to outline the extent to which individuals subscribe to fundamental tenets of federalism, or where they are located on a spectrum that runs from integration to decentralization (Livingston 1952). Drawing on work by Duchacek (1987) and Elazar (1987), Cole, Kincaid and Rodriguez (2004, see also Cole and Kincaid 2006, Kincaid and Cole 2005, 2011, 2016) evaluate preferences (a) for federalism as a form of government, (b) for the heterogeneity or diversity of cultures and (c) for decentralized decision-making. For Brown, the search for a federal political culture includes the vertical distribution of resources through fiscal federalism as well as the extent to which individuals identify with the state and/or the constituent unit of the nation (Brown 2013; Brown and Deem 2016). This work includes attitudes to institutions (their ideal arrangements, evaluations of their performance) as well as attitudes to society (their ideal construction and attachment to nested groups within the state). Such an approach offers a means to compare existing federations, but adaptation is required to explore the capacity for subjective unionism or autonomism in states with other governance arrangements. There is, by contrast, work of greater transferable benefit on the subjective dimensions of diversity and integration. We identify three relevant examples: nationalism and ethnic conflict; multiculturalism and immigrant integration; and, social solidarity and cohesion.

The diversity and ethnic conflict literature attempts to identify structural as well as subjective impediments to conflict, including access to economic, social and political resources. If certain groups are materially disadvantaged in their acquisition of these resources, interethnic conflict is perceived to be more likely (Montalvo and Reynal Querol 2005; Wimmer et al 2009). Examples of such variables include access to employment and political influence. Two points are worth highlighting. First, while the focus is on objective access to resources, the possibility of perceived access to resources is not excluded. Second, the different indicators are not necessarily *signs* of low levels of conflict (in the sense that diversity indicators are signs of low or high levels of diversity) but are measures of *predictors* of low likelihood of conflict (ie those features of society that are likely to mitigate against conflict).

The multiculturalism literature, by contrast, identifies both predictors of and proof of immigrant integration (Castles et al 2002, Mollenkopf and Hochschild 2009, Ager and Strange 2008). Those with greater 'capacity', including linguistic skills, are seen to be more likely to integrate (predictors), while those with greater knowledge of, or greater psychological ties to, their new society are seen to be more integrated (Bilodeau and White 2014). Researchers identify both attitudinal and behavioural dimensions in political, economic and social domains. Here integration is defined as leading a fulfilling and successful life and is deliberately distinguished from assimilation (Harder et al 2018): after all, integrated societies can be diverse. There is also a multi-level element to integration (Rustenbach 2010). Bilodeau et al (2010), for example, employ measures of regional integration, evaluating the extent to which migrants employ a provincial lens through which to evaluate federal-provincial relations as a sign of multi-level integration; the more one adopts a regional perspective within the state, the more integrated one is.

Related to this is the literature on cohesion. Internal state cohesion, discussed in the context of economic development and democratisation, is viewed as the sublimation of personal interests to a wider state goal. Research in this vein explores the process by which state elites develop shared goals, shored up by capacity to follow these through, aided by an effective state bureaucracy, or the 'appropriate relations of authority' (Chibber 2002). Here, the goal

is to orient actors away from personal gain towards state goals through a state *esprit de corps* (Chibber 2002, Evans 1995, Evans and Rauch 1999). While the prioritization of individual goals is seen as an impediment to state cohesion so too do authors perceive multi-level challenges to state cohesion. Reminiscent of the early political culture work in the 1960s, attachment to non-state entities such as ethnic or sub-state groups is seen as a source of risk to state cohesion and state survival. Hanks (2011) charts, for example, cohesion challenges in Kyrgyzstan, noting the difficulties facing efforts to create a shared sense of identity among Kyrgyz, Russian and Uzbek ethnic groups. Here, signs of a lack of cohesion include a perceived lack of applicability or universality of national icons or epics. Later efforts, which sought to instil a sense of cohesion around 'national values' such as freedom or the rule of law, likewise achieved limited success. This highlights the importance of subjective dimensions to cohesion, and identity in particular.

Cohesion can, of course, take different forms. As 'cohesion policy' it seeks to bridge social and economic disparities across regions within a state (Bache 2008). This also speaks to the multi-level elements of cohesion. Chan et al (2006) argue cohesion has micro, mezzo (meso) and macro elements, that it is not just a case of individuals integrating within states, although Dickes et al (2014) argue that addressing the meso level of cohesion in particular is difficult. Social cohesion refers to individual-level diversity and the ways in which individuals integrate within the larger society. The various pluralism literatures, however, explore the same dynamics for different groups seeking to integrate within a 'larger society' (Berry 1999) or 'national society' (Kymlicka 2001). These approaches often reference feelings of identification with or attachment to the wider society, which raises the prospect of a spectrum of intra-state cohesion where the units are not groups defined by their ethnicity but meso-level regions within a state. If the literatures on multiculturalism and cohesion vary from melting pots to cultural pluralism, that same variation could be expected from subjective autonomism to subjective unionism.

The social cohesion literature is, in many ways, closest to our current endeavour given efforts to identify its various dimensions. Researchers have sought to measure the subjective aspects of cohesion, and in so doing identify both the range of dimensions as well as the ways in which states vary in their cohesiveness. Jenson (1998), for example, identified five possible

dimensions: affiliation/isolation; insertion/exclusion; participation; acceptance/rejection; and, legitimacy/illegitimacy. This includes attitudinal as well as behavioural (insertion, participation) elements. Green et al (2009) focus instead on trust, tolerance, active citizenship and solidarity. Dickes et al (2014) adapt both Bernard (1999) and Dickes et al (2010) to create a two by two table of possible measures, distinguishing between political and socio-cultural dimensions as well as attitudinal and behavioural elements. This includes a sense of confidence and satisfaction in institutions (political/attitudinal), participation and political interest (political/behavioural), solidarity (sociocultural/attitudinal) and a measure of involvement in various associations that are all intended to serve as proxies for common values and a sense of belonging.

We draw on the various literatures cited above in the development of our multidimensional measure of subjective unionism. From the ethnic conflict literature, for example, we include dimensions on grievance and perceived access to resources. From the social citizenship literature, we include dimensions on policy uniformity. We would argue, however, that several improvements could be made when adapting subjective measurements of solidarity or cohesion to unions and unionism. First, we exclude all behavioural elements and employ only attitudinal measures. The behavioural elements in the socio-cultural dimensions of cohesion measures serve as proxies of attitudinal measures in any event, so employing attitudinal indicators seems a more straightforward option. Furthermore, we know that various forms of engagement are tied to the resources to which one has access. A failure to participate could thus stem more from access to resources than attitudinal dispositions toward the union. Likewise, unlike studies of ethnic conflict, we are not keen to evaluate whether there are disparities across groups in terms of their access to economic and political power and therefore the logic of including behavioural elements in other measures does not apply in our case. We similarly exclude any measures that would be classified as predictors of, or structural features that would facilitate, unionism or autonomism. In short we employ measures of unionism, rather than measures of contexts that might give rise to unionism.

Second, we distinguish between identification with particular communities and a sense of common values. Others studying solidarity include these under the single heading of affiliation (Jenson 1998) but we believe that these are conceptually distinct. Identity reflects

a sense of closeness to a particular entity and its salience to one's self conception. Shared values reflect shared understandings among group members. They need not covary. One can find shared values across a state but high levels of regional identity. For the moment we leave aside shared values. Third, we identify solidarity dimensions in both social and economic domains but rather than focus on variations across social groups defined by ethnicity, culture or religion we evaluate solidarity at different territorial scales. The resulting conceptualisation, which offers both vertical (region-state) and horizontal (inter-regional) elements (Chan et al 2006), allows us to measure the following four dimensions of subjective unionism, or the four 'unions of the mind':

**Identity union:** For this we distinguish between attachment to communities at different territorial scales (which need not be zero sum) and a measure of relative attachment, which explores attachment to the state relative to attachment to communities at other territorial scales. Here we develop a technique employed earlier (Henderson et al 2013) and subtract regional attachment from state attachment. For an additional discussion of relative identity see Strebel and Kübler this volume. We use the term 'identity' loosely, as survey questions can include indicators of identification with or attachment to different entities, as well as preferred identity labels. Each of these could be employed but we specifically exclude measures of pride here.

**Union of Social (policy) Solidarity:** We are interested here not in the presence of absence of policy variation across units of a state (see, for example, McDermott 2003) but in attitudes to the extent of desirable policy variation across the state. Related to this is the desired degree of subsidiarity over policy decisions both in general (a sense that the region should be more powerful) and specific (the region should control welfare policy, for example).


**Union of Economic Solidarity** – We focus here on support for economic redistribution across the units of a state (policy support for redistribution) as well as a sense that resources are distributed appropriately within the state (policy evaluation).

**Legitimate Union** – Last, we focus on the perceived legitimacy of the state as union, or fairness in its structures. This could include relative indicators of trust, satisfaction or

confidence in different territorial scales as well as measures designed to test, explicitly, the perceived fairness of institutional arrangements within the state.

These dimensions (summarised in Table 1) vary across vertical and horizontal domains, as well as the extent to which they reflect attitudes to the union as a social construct and the union as a functioning state. We anticipate that they could vary independently both at the individual and aggregate level. In other words, individuals could have low levels of identification with the state (relative to the meso-level region) but a strong sense of state-wide economic and political solidarity. Likewise, states where individuals have a strong sense of state-wide political solidarity could have a weak sense of state-wide economic solidarity. Our goal here is to identify independent dimensions of subjective unionism to explore how they interact. Likewise, we anticipate that these dimensions would be present in all states, regardless of their constitutional structure. The dimensions draw on attitudes to basic principles of state organisation, rather than satisfaction with particular existing features of specific types of states. Efforts to evaluate legitimacy discuss perceived fairness in the distribution of resources rather than attitudes to existing modes of resource distribution or fiscal federalism. Our effort is therefore to offer a more generalizable advance on efforts to examine attitudes to federalism in federal states.

**Table 1: Unions of the Mind**

	Vertical (state-region)	Horizontal (inter-regional)
Attitudes to the union as a social construct	<b>Identity</b> State identity Regional identity Relative identity (state-region)	<b>Economic Solidarity</b> Government step in, even out ec differences Fair share of state resources Relative concern re groups at different territorial scales
	<b>Fairness</b> Relative trust Relative efficacy Decentralization of power to lower level	<b>Political solidarity</b> Support for policy uniformity Ideal influence for those in different regions
	Attitudes to the union as a functioning state	The union as good (pride) Benefits of the union

### The United Kingdom as a Subjective State

The rest of the paper examines existing data from the United Kingdom across these four dimensions. The UK presents an ideal case study with which to demonstrate the utility of exploring unions of the mind because there exists substantial institutional variation by territory, a developed body of research on the UK as a union state, and a rich body of data probing attitudes to different territorial scales within the state.

The opening two paragraphs of this paper will already have alerted those readers to the significant territorial-institutional differences across the UK. But differences across the England-Scotland border are only part of the story. The existence of a separate Northern Ireland legal jurisdiction means that there are three (Northern Irish, Scottish and an English (and Welsh)) legal systems across the state, but in addition Wales has its own devolved parliament making laws that apply only in Wales and its justice system is also increasingly distinct from that of England (see Jones and Wyn Jones forthcoming.) And while Scotland and England have different state churches, neither Wales nor Northern Ireland has

established churches at all (although for different reasons and as a result of very different processes.)

Space precludes extensive discussion of the patterns of uniformity and difference that characterise the (still) United Kingdom. For our purposes, however, it is enough to note that it is multi-level, as well as a multi and pluri-national state: multi-national in the sense that there exist in different parts of the state significant populations professing strong senses of English, Irish, Scottish, and Welsh national identity; pluri-national in the sense that many (though not all) English, Scottish, Welsh and some Irish identifiers also identify as British.<sup>5</sup>

This complex pattern of national and ethnic identities is overlain onto a state structure that is asymmetrically regionalised. By far the largest part of the state in population terms, England, some 85% of the whole, remains highly centralised with only weak local government and meso-level government that is both weak and geographically incomplete. By contrast Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have their own devolved legislatures and associated devolved executives enjoying significant policy autonomy. All of this has the effect of ensuring that there is very significant policy uniformity (and indeed, central control) across the largest unit of the state, and in some policy areas across (at least parts) of the rest too. But there are also other policy areas where there are substantial differences between the four territories. Some of these differences are recent, post-dating the devolution reforms of the 1999. But in other areas (education is a good example), differences are much more long-standing in nature, reflecting the fact that Scotland and (Northern) Ireland have always been treated as distinct units within the UK state (differentiation with regards to Wales having (re)emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century.)

While this state is highly integrated economically, it is also characterised by significant territorial inequalities in terms of economic outcomes. Moreover, while financial redistribution takes place across the state, the funding formula used to distribute funds from the centre to the devolved territories does *not* operate on the basis of need, but rather – for

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<sup>5</sup> Although to further complicate matters, not all British identifiers – especially England's substantial ethnic minority population – also identify as English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish. But the exclusive British identity manifested in Northern Ireland would appear to be different again from the exclusive British identity prevalent in parts of urban England.



historic reasons – privileges the richest of the three (Scotland) over the other two, and indeed over England itself.

There is, of course, a long history of studying unionism in the United Kingdom, predominantly in Northern Ireland but also, at times, in Scotland and Wales although much of it focuses on the specifics of the case at hand and therefore provides less by way of comparative lessons. There are some exceptions. McLean and McMillan (2005), for example, distinguish between primordial and instrumental forms of unionism, conceived as a belief in the good of the union compared to a recognition of the benefits of the union. Farrington and Walker argue that unionism requires hybridity as exemplified by those who describe themselves as 'Scottish Britons' rather than Scottish or British nationalists (2009). Ganiel (2006) notes that unionism is bound up in the belief that the state can protect certain values. These relate to our indicators – namely that identities can be multiple and overlapping rather than zero sum, as well as the notion that unionism can relate to both the perceived functioning of the state as well as social constructs or communities of importance.

To determine whether this conceptual understanding of the state as a union of the mind applies in the case of the United Kingdom, we rely on the 2019 data from the Future of England Survey, which conducted parallel surveys in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Operating since 2011 the Future of England Survey tracks attitudes to identity, governance, and the unions in which England finds or found itself – that is the UK and EU (Wyn Jones et al 2012, Wyn Jones et al 2013). It has fielded parallel surveys outside England, in Scotland and Wales in 2014 and in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2018 and 2019. It is these most recent data that we use to examine subjective unionism in the United Kingdom. Fieldwork for this was conducted by YouGov of its online panel in Scotland, England and Wales. The Northern Ireland fieldwork was coordinated by YouGov, using a YouGov interface but from a panel sourced from LucidTalk. The resulting samples are 1594 (England), 1006 (Scotland), 1503 (Wales) and 1029 (Northern Ireland).

We examine these data to explore the extent of subjective unionism across the UK, examine the latent structure across the unions of the mind dimensions and examine the impact of such attitudes on support for the continuation of the state. Our goal is also to show that,

when confronted with 'typical' datasets, efforts can be made to evaluate subjective unionism.

On identity, we asked respondents which identities they would use to describe themselves, where they would place themselves on the Moreno categories and the strength with which they hold any of the identities they selected earlier. For our purposes we use the 0 to 10 indicators of identity strength and use these to create a measure of relative attachment to the state (strength of state identity minus strength of regional identity). The strength variables allow us to determine not only whether one feels more or less British but the degree to which this is true on a 21 point scale that is recoded as varying from 0 to 1.

On social solidarity we posed a series of questions to determine whether the UK is perceived to be a single policy community. To this end we asked about support for policy uniformity across five fields, including those that are devolved across some (e.g. justice) or all of the devolved regions (e.g. tuition fees) and those that are not devolved (e.g. unemployment benefits). This includes those where there are well publicised variations across the state (e.g. paying for elderly care, prescription charges) and those where there are variations but they are less well known (e.g. justice sentencing) or whether there is no variation (e.g. unemployment benefits). The resulting social solidarity index is a count variable for the number of policy fields one feels should be uniform (to a max of 5) rescaled so that it varies between 0 and 1.

On economic solidarity we asked respondents how they felt about the inter-regional distribution of resources in principle, as well as whether they would share resources with different parts of the UK. The support-in-principle questions ask "The UK government should step in to even out economic differences between the different parts of the UK"; "Money should be transferred from the richer parts of the UK to the poorer parts to ensure that everyone can have similar levels of public services" with respondents asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree on a five point scale.

The solidarity in practice questions asked respondents whether they believed taxes raised in their region should be shared across the UK or remain in their region to fund public services.

We created four versions of the question, one that referred explicitly to sharing with the rest of the UK and three others that mentioned the other territories. In Wales, for example, each question had the same first option: "Revenue raised from taxpayers in Wales should be spent entirely in Wales". The four questions had the following other response options with respondents randomly assigned to see only one of these:

- Revenue raised from taxpayers in Wales should be distributed across the whole of the UK to help support public services
- Revenue raised from taxpayers in Wales should also be distributed to Northern Ireland to help support Northern Irish public services
- Revenue raised from taxpayers in Wales should also be distributed to Scotland to help support Scottish public services
- Revenue raised from taxpayers in Wales should also be distributed to England to help support English public services

We can merge the four questions to create a willingness to share variable, coded 0 (not willing) or 1 (willing). The resulting economic solidarity index combines these two halves (solidarity in principle and in practice) and is scaled to run from 0 to 1.

On legitimacy, we asked respondents whether they believed each part of the UK received its fair share of resources, too much or too little. If we were to devise an unfairness index we would be interested in those respondents who believed that they had too few resources and other parts had too much. Our fairness index is the opposite of this, looking at whether individuals believe that their own region has an appropriate amount of resources or too much, and other regions receive the right amount or too little. This index relates, obviously, to the distribution of resources (as does economic solidarity) but it is included as an assessment of how the state is working across the constituent units of the union. Table 2 summarises the various indicators in the unionism scale.

**Table 2: Unions of the Mind, FoES 2019**

	Indicator and coding
Identity	Relative identity (British-substate)
Social (policy) solidarity	Policy uniformity index across 5 policies

Economic solidarity	Sharing in principle: State should intervene to even out differences State should transfer money to poorer regions Sharing in practice: Share resources (1) vs distributed them to others (0)
Legitimacy	Own region fair share or more Other regions fair share or less

When we employ the above coding scheme and aggregate the results, we can calculate scores for the different dimensions for each of our four meso-level regions. All indicators run from 0 to 1, with higher results implying greater support for subjective unionism. The scores across the UK are all above .5 (just), ranging from the midpoint in Scotland to a high of .62 in England. Measures of social solidarity are high (if by that we mean a desire for policy uniformity across the state), and well above .5 even in those areas with devolution. The lowest figures are for economic solidarity (ranging from .40 in Scotland to .46 in Northern Ireland) and Britishness, where figures are well below .5 in Scotland and Northern Ireland, but above .5 in England and Wales.

**Table 3: Unions of the mind in the United Kingdom**

	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Relative identity	.51 (.16)	.36 (.26)	.57 (.30)	.40 (.20)
Social solidarity	.89 (.25)	.67 (.40)	.81 (.31)	.63 (.40)
Economic solidarity	.42 (.13)	.40 (.11)	.41 (.12)	.46 (.12)
Fairness	.63 (.39)	.58 (.30)	.49 (.30)	.69 (.28)
Total	.62 (.14)	.50 (.18)	.57 (.17)	.54 (.15)

Figures are mean scores for each territory by dimension with standard deviations in parentheses. Source: FoES 2019

Factor loadings for the various dimensions confirm that the different indicators align in their conceptually distinct dimensions. There are, however, interesting variations. In England, the four dimensions are relatively separate, with each of the separate variables on policy competence (that policy should be uniform across the state), loading together as a single uniformity index, the fair share questions loading together, and attitudes to economic

solidarity in principle loading as a pair. Identity, however, relates to willingness to share in practice. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, attitudes to sharing in practice and to fairness are more closely related to identity, which suggests that attitudes to Britishness as an identity are in part a reflection of the operation of the state and the perceived fairness of relations among the territories.<sup>6</sup>

While these results are interesting in themselves as they highlight the relationship among dimensions and the extent of variation within a single state, more detail is warranted. When a state has constituent regions that score between .50 and .62 on unionism what does this look like 'on the ground' as it were? With respect to identities, we are examining the strength with which particular identities are held but there are multiple ways to ask about national identity. We can examine the proportion of respondents listing that they hold the state identity (in this case British) as their 'best' identity or as 'any' of multiple identities. In 2018, when the forced choice identity question was last used, the FoES data reveal that across the UK there was not a single territorial unit where a majority of respondents describe themselves as British first and foremost. The highest figures were in England, where 42% described themselves as British, but this is almost 10 points lower in Wales, and a further ten points lower yet again in Scotland. When we allow individuals to include British as 'any' salient identity, as we did in 2018 and 2019, the figures increase by 20 points in England and Scotland, and by almost 30 in Wales.

State and sub-state identities are not necessarily zero sum, but we can see patterns in the relationship between Britishness and the relevant territorial identity when we use the shorthand Moreno question, which forces individuals to choose which of five categories best fit their identity label (British not English, More British than English etc) or when we allow individuals to gauge the strength of attachment on a 0 to 10 scale. The average score for Britishness are .62 (.33) in Scotland, .73 (.29) in Wales, .78 (.26) in England and .50 (.43) in Northern Ireland, while the average score for the relevant sub-state identity is .85 (.28) Scottish, .67 (.40) Welsh, .77 (.30) English, and .67 (.39) Northern Irish.

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<sup>6</sup> Full results from factor analysis are available from the authors.

On social solidarity, while the general message is that support for the UK as a policy community is high, there are interesting variations across policy fields and across territories. In general, there is greater support for policy uniformity in England and Wales than in Scotland and Northern Ireland, with majority support for variation on prescription charges in those places. Majorities of respondents in England and Wales support policy uniformity across all five policy areas. Some policy areas prompt disagreement across the territorial units of the UK. There is more consistent support for uniformity on unemployment benefit, for example. Support for policy variation is not necessarily higher for devolved policy fields. Punishment of young offenders prompts among the greatest Scottish support for uniformity, for a policy where there is existing and long-standing (if not often visible) variation.

With respect to economic solidarity we are interested in support in principle for the notion of sharing resources, as well as with support in practice for sharing resources with other parts of the UK. In general, we see far greater support in principle for state intervention, but variable support for sharing with specific places. On the practice of economic solidarity, respondents across the constituent territories of the UK are unwilling to share resources. There is only a majority for sharing in Northern Ireland when we prime for the UK as a whole and in no other instance is there majority support for sharing. Willingness to share is particularly low in Scotland and Wales, and particularly so if the option is to share with areas that have devolved legislatures. Support for inter-regional economic solidarity is therefore higher in principle than it is in practice.

Finally, we asked about fairness within the union. Here we rely on questions asking whether other parts receive the appropriate amount of resources, too little or too much. In general, voters outside England think England gets more than its fair share of resources, while those in England think it gets less than its fair share. Indeed if we look at 'less than their fair share', respondents in a region are more likely to believe that they are getting less but all other parts of the UK would disagree (with the possible exception of Wales, where between  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of respondents in Scotland and Northern Ireland also tend to agree that Wales gets less than it should).

It is all very interesting to suggest that something such as subjective unionism exists, and that it helps us to understand how people in different parts of the UK feel but whether this has any consequences for attitudes to the continuation of the state, however, is less clear. Does this relate, for example, to continued support for the constitutional status quo? To explore this, as a final step we use the four dimensions as independent variables and treat different measures of support for constitutional change as the dependent variables. We do so in three ways: first, with a dependent variable probing support for independence in one's own part of the UK or, in the case of Northern Ireland, Irish reunification; second, as an index of support for radical change (specifically an additive index of support for independence in Scotland, Wales, England and for Irish reunification) and third as support for a measure that includes both support for independence and ambivalence to the union, namely the view that other parts of the UK should be free to forge their own way.<sup>7</sup>

To accompany the four dimensions, we include a number of other control variables, including gender, age and education, an index of low efficacy, and left-right political attitudes. This helps us to capture political attitudes that might not be related to the union as a whole.

**Table 4a Unions of the mind and England**

	Own independence	Independence index	Union ambivalence
Gender	.03 (.08)	.06 (.08)	.18 (.23)
Age	-.10 (.19)	-.10 (.19)	-.89 (.57)
Education	.09 (.09)	.06 (.09)	.2 (.26)
Trust	-.31 (.17) *	-.26 (.16)	.40 (.49)
Low efficacy	.67 (.16) ***	.54 (.16) ***	1.04 (.50) **
Right	.13 (.19)	-.10 (.18)	-.31 (.54)
Relative identity	-.53 (.23) **	-.38 (.22) *	-2.01 (.70) ***
Social solidarity	-.66 (.15) ***	-.53 (.14) ***	-1.20 (.46) ***

<sup>7</sup> The original question in, for example, Northern Ireland asked: <1> I don't want independence for Northern Ireland but if one or more other parts of the UK decide they want to go their own way then so be it; <2> I want Northern Ireland to declare independence from the rest of the UK; <3> It is a priority for me that the UK stays as it is, a union of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland <4> Don't know. Variable recoded so that options 1 and 2 = 1, option 3=0.

Economic solidarity	-.07 (.32)	.46 (.31)	-.23 (.94)
Fairness	-.33 (.10) ***	-.24 (.10) **	-1.30 (.31) ***
Constant	.47 (.31)	.27 (.29)	2.61 (.97)
R2	.17	.13	.14

Results in the first two columns are coefficients and standard errors for linear regression. Results in column 3 are for binary logistic regression (with R2 as Nagelkerke)

The results suggest that if we want to understand attitudes to the union and its future, then the standard variables – looking at whether people feel a strong sense of sub-state identity or Britishness are perhaps less helpful than other elements of subjective unionism. Chief among these is a sense of social solidarity and perceived fairness. Each of these is relatively more important to support of independence, or a certain ambivalence to the continuation of the union, than identity.

Of the non-union variables, none of the demographic variables matter and of the controls, only a sense of low efficacy matters, in each case making one more likely to support change. While we have selected variables that are phrased in a more general way about people having no say or politics being complicated the questions refer to the UK Parliament and so there is a risk of some endogeneity here.

**Table 4b Unions of the mind and Scotland**

	Own independence	Independence index	Union ambivalence
Gender	.07 (.09)	.07 (.09)	.09 (.42)
Age	-.23 (.18)	.00 (.18)	-1.16 (.88)
Education	.03 (.09)	-.03 (.10)	-.30 (.47)
Trust	-.16 (.16)	-.17 (.16)	.14 (.78)
Low efficacy	.13 (.19)	.27 (.21)	-.91 (.94)
Right	-.89 (.21) ***	-.71 (.23) ***	-2.91 (1.06) ***
Relative identity	-1.23 (.18) ***	-1.11 (.19) ***	-4.94 (1.03) ***
Social solidarity	-.53 (.11) ***	-.53 (.12) ***	-1.90 (.61) ***
Economic solidarity	.34 (.37)	.32 (.29)	1.10 (1.83)
Fairness	-.48 (.16) ***	-.31 (.17) *	-1.86 (.72) **
Constant	1.53 (.25) ***	1.11 (.28) ***	7.32 (1.53) ***



R2	.58	.55	.59
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The Scottish results are similar to those in England, with the exception that relative identity has a stronger effect on attitudes, and social solidarity, rather than economic solidarity, appears to play a role. The Welsh results are similar to those in Scotland with the exception that generalized trust is a positive predictor of support for Welsh independence but also for independence in general.

**Table 4c Unions of the mind and Wales**

	Own independence	Independence index	Union ambivalence
Gender	.07 (.06)	.06 (.06)	.25 (.24)
Age	-.42 (.16) ***	-.14 (.16)	-.99 (.62)
Education	-.05 (.07)	-.03 (.07)	-.45 (.28)
Trust	.39 (.13) ***	.25 (.12) **	.42 (.47)
Low efficacy	.21 (.13)	.20 (.13)	-.57 (.52)
Right	-.68 (.17) ***	-.68 (.16) ***	-2.48 (.65) ***
Relative identity	-.69 (.11) ***	-.66 (.11) ***	-1.17 (.42) ***
Social solidarity	-.61 (.10) ***	-.44 (.09) ***	-1.46 (.42) ***
Economic solidarity	.21 (.26)	.16 (.25)	1.19 (1.01)
Fairness	-.29 (.11) **	-.34 (.11) ***	-1.24 (.41) ***
Constant	.67 (.20) ***	.68 (.19) ***	3.77 (.82) ***
R2	.41	.40	.32

If the Scottish and Welsh results suggest that economic solidarity has a weaker relationship with attitudes to the continuation of the state and social solidarity has a stronger relationship, the same is not true in Northern Ireland, where economic solidarity plays a stronger role but also whether both economic and social solidarity relate to support for independence. The model fit across the four nations varies from lows of .13 to .17 in England to highs of .64 to .78 in Northern Ireland. In general, model fit for the three devolved nations is stronger, which might reflect both a) longer polling of these questions in devolved nations which itself is a sign that the questions apply better to devolved contexts and b) more established campaigns for constitutional change (including enhanced devolution or independence) in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**Table 4d Unions of the mind and Northern Ireland**

	Own independence	Independence index	Union ambivalence
Gender	-.07 (.05)	-.04 (.05)	-.30 (.42)
Age	-.09 (.13)	-.18 (.14)	-1.18 (1.01)
Education	.10 (.06) *	.11 (.06) *	.15 (.43)
Trust	.46 (.12) ***	.46 (.12) ***	2.86 (1.04) ***
Low efficacy	.20 (.11) *	.13 (.12)	.017 (.85)
Right	-1.77 (.12) ***	-1.58 (.12) ***	-7.92 (1.03) ***
Relative identity	-.91 (.14) ***	-.82 (.14) ***	-.69 (.50)
Social solidarity	-.16 (.07) **	-.12 (.07)	-.13 (1.63)
Economic solidarity	.53 (.24) **	.28 (.25)	-2.82 (.71) ***
Fairness	-.55 (.09) ***	-.70 (.10) ***	9.02 (1.93) ***
Constant	1.23 (.21) ***	1.24 (.21) ***	9.02 (1.93) ***
R2	.64	.64	.78

## Conclusions

Our goal has been to demonstrate that states can be conceived of as unions of the mind, located along a spectrum that runs from subjective unionism to subjective autonomism, and, critically, that within states we can also find variation, with different regions displaying higher or lower levels of subjective unionism. After reviewing the relevant literatures, we identified four dimensions of subjective unionism: identity, social solidarity, economic solidarity and legitimacy. Operationalising these insights from the literature, our findings suggest that we can indeed conceive of states as unions of the mind, varying in the extent to which their inhabitants subscribe to a unionised or autonomised view of the state. Not only that, but we found that these various dimensions have a consistent structure and that responses from public attitudes data show that the level of subjective unionism varies within and across the various territorial units of a single state, in our case, the United Kingdom.

In addition, we can see that the different dimensions of subjective unionism are not just interesting features of a state but are also relevant to contemporary politics. Our findings

suggest, for example, that the four dimensions identified relate to how one feels about the state as a political structure and relate to attitudes to independence for one's own region, the continued future of the state or what we might term a form of 'union ambivalence'. The identity and legitimacy aspects of subjective unionism have a consistent relationship with these different dependent variables, but the subjective unions of social and economic solidarity also play a role in certain circumstances. Understanding states as unions of the mind therefore extends beyond an interesting conceptualisation and can help us to understand the factors that influence continued support for the state (or, from a different perspective, can help us understand why support for independence might be higher or lower in different regions). In this context, subjective unionism can be seen as a source of continued resilience for states, and of course vice versa.

There are obvious caveats to our findings. First, in this paper we have been reliant on the data and indicators to hand in one state only. Notwithstanding that fact that that state, the United Kingdom, is much more internally diverse than is often recognised, a comprehensive evaluation of all four dimensions across a wider range of cases would be an obvious next step. This in turn would require designing and fielding indicators that capture patterns of continuity and difference across potentially very different state-contexts. Second, much of the regional political culture literature focuses on the extent to which values are shared within states, with this informing the current study. But variation in political attitudes, both in terms of attitudes to decentralization and in terms of political attitudes more broadly, is another possible dimension to unionism/ autonomism and worthy of further exploration. These caveats, therefore, can equally be treated as guides to research questions that could be addressed by future scholars.

We began this paper by emphasising the wide variety of institutional forms that can and do characterise contemporary states and posited that it is reasonable to expect that any subjective sense of belonging to a state will also vary considerably both between and, indeed, within them. We have argued and have sought to demonstrate that it is possible to match efforts by social scientists to measure how decentralized and/or diverse (or not) states are in objective terms, by measuring the extent of subjective unionism. Even if the Scottish Government's prospectus for independence – or for breaking the 'political union' – was rejected in 2014, the question of Scottish independence remains very much alive, as

indeed does that of Irish reunification following the result of the Brexit referendum in 2016. Moreover, the UK is very far from being the only state in western Europe, let alone further afield, where fundamental questions about the future relationship between the central institutions of that state and its constituent parts remain a live and often controversial issue. As such, understanding the dynamics that underpin and may potentially undermine 'unions of the mind' is an important priority for scholars.

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## Online Appendix

### Variables and Question Wording

In all cases, those who responded 'don't know' were excluded from the analysis.

**Relative identity**, index created from subtracting regional (meso-level) identity score from state identity score, rescaled to vary between 0 and 1. Here is a scale that we would like you to use to describe to what extent you think of yourself as x. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means 'not at all' and 10 means 'very strongly' where would you place yourself.

**More/Less than fair share**, coded as 1 if more/less (depends on phrasing of variable), 0 otherwise. Would you say that compared with other parts of the UK, each of these gets pretty much their fair share of government spending, more than their fair share, or less than their fair share

England

Scotland

Wales

Northern Ireland

1 Gets their fair share

2 Gets more than their fair share

3 Gets less than their fair share

4 Don't know

**Policy uniformity 1 to 5**, coded as 1 if supports uniformity, 0 otherwise: Below is a list of policies.

Can you say whether you think each policy should be uniform across the whole of the UK or whether policies should vary if different parts of the UK want different policies

Unemployment benefits (1)

Tuition fees for higher education (2)

Paying for the care of vulnerable old people (3)

Punishment of young offenders (4)

Prescription charges (5)

1 Should be the same across the UK

2 Should vary if different parts of the UK want different policies

3 Don't know

**Solidarity in principle: Even out differences** The UK government should step in to even out economic differences between the different parts of the UK, coded between 0 and 1 with higher numbers implying agreement; **Interregional transfers**: Money should be transferred from the richer parts of the UK to the poorer parts to ensure that everyone can have similar levels of public, coded between 0 and 1, with higher numbers implying agreement

1 strongly agree

2 tend to agree

3 neither agree nor disagree

4 tend to disagree

5 strongly disagree

6 don't know

### Solidarity in practice

Merged responses to a question-wording experiment with respondents coded as 1 if they preferred sharing and Other wises. Question phrasing for the English survey has parallel versions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland: Revenue raised from taxpayers in England should be spent entirely in England (0)

Revenue raised from taxpayers in England should be spent throughout the whole of the UK to help support public services/should be distributed to Scotland/Wales/Northern Ireland to help support Scottish/Welsh/Northern Ireland public services (1)

### **Dependent variables**

#### **Own independence**

On a scale of -10 to +10 where =10 is Definitely No and +10 is Definitely Yes, do you think that Scotland/Wales/England should become an independent country. In Northern Ireland: And using a slightly different scale, what about Northern Ireland. If -10 is Definitely remain in a union with the United Kingdom and +10 is Definitely should become part of a united Ireland, what do you think should happen in Northern Ireland?

#### **Independence index**

Additive index from the four questions about independence in Scotland, England, Wales and Irish reunification in Northern Ireland

**Union ambivalence** Parallel question asked with modified phrasing in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland phrasing is as follows: <1> I don't want independence for Northern Ireland but if one or more other parts of the UK decide they want to go their own way then so be it; <2> I want Northern Ireland to declare independence from the rest of the UK; <3> It is a priority for me that the UK stays as it is, a union of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland <4> Don't know. Variable recoded so that options 1 and 2 = 1, option 3=0.

#### **Independent variables**

Demographic/socio-economic variables: Gender, coded as 1 female, 0 male. Age, runs from 0 (youngest respondent) to 1 (oldest respondent). Education, coded as 1 if holds a university degree, 0 otherwise

**Trust**, variable running 0 to 1, Generally speaking would you say that most people can't be trusted or that most people can be trusted? Please answer on this scale where 0 means 'most people can't be trusted' and 10 means 'most people can be trusted'

**Low efficacy**, additive index formed from three questions (all 5 point Likerts), coded in the direction of low efficacy, rescaled to vary between 0 and 1

Sometimes UK politics seems so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on

People like me don't have any say about what the UK Parliament does

The UK Parliament doesn't care much about what people like me think

**Right**, left-right index, varying from 0 (left) to 1 (right). In political matters people talk of 'the left' and 'the right' On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is the most left and 10 is the most right, where would you place your views on this scale generally speaking?

**Unions of the mind: Social solidarity** – additive index created from the five policy uniformity variables, rescaled to vary between 0 and 1. **Relative identity** as described above.

**Economic solidarity** – additive index created from the principle and practice variables, rescaled to vary between 0 and 1 **Fairness** Additive index from individual components, coded as 1 if respondent felt own region received more or fair share of resources, and 1 for each other region where respondent felt it received less or fair share of resources, rescaled to vary between 0 and 1.

## Factor Analysis

Below are the results of the factor analysis for the four dimensions across Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Full question wording is available below. Results are factor loadings from principal component analysis with Varimax rotation

Table A1: Factor analysis in England

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Policy uniformity 1	.765			
Policy uniformity 2	.806			
Policy uniformity 3	.829			
Policy uniformity 4	.795			
Policy uniformity 5	.815			
England gets more than its fair share		.758		
Wales gets less than its fair share		.837		
Northern Ireland gets less than its fair share		.791		
Scotland gets less than its fair share		.750		
Support for interregional transfers			.901	
State should even out differences			.896	
Relative identity				.844
Support for sharing resources in practice				.659

Source: FoES 2019

Table A2: Factor analysis in Northern Ireland

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Policy uniformity 1	.776			
Policy uniformity 2	.821			
Policy uniformity 3	.874			
Policy uniformity 4	.809			
Policy uniformity 5	.820			
State should even out differences		.864		
Support for interregional transfers		.863		
Northern Ireland gets more than its fair share			.748	
England gets less than its fair share			.746	
Support for sharing resources in practice			.652	
Wales gets less than its fair share				.840
Scotland gets less than its fair share				.788
Relative identity				-.341

Source: FoES 2019

Table A3. Factor analysis in Scotland

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Policy uniformity 1	.789			
Policy uniformity 2	.853			
Policy uniformity 3	.890			
Policy uniformity 4	.856			
Policy uniformity 5	.848			
Relative identity		.693		
Scotland gets more than its fair share		.777		
Support for sharing resources in practice		.575		
Northern Ireland gets less than its fair share			.899	
Wales gets less than its fair share			.871	
State should even out differences				.882
Support for inter-regional transfers				.851

Source: FoES 2019

Table A4. Factor analysis in Wales

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Policy uniformity 1	.743			
Policy uniformity 2	.812			
Policy uniformity 3	.865			
Policy uniformity 4	.745			
Policy uniformity 5	.751			
Relative identity		.559		
Wales gets more than its fair share		.739		
England gets less than its fair share		.689		-.305
Support for sharing resources in practice		.633		
State should even out differences			.882	
Support for interregional transfers			.865	
Northern Ireland gets less than its fair share				.819
Scotland gets less than its fair share				.802

Source: FoES 2019

