Impending crisis in Scotland: political discourse in interesting times

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Abstract

This chapter looks at the management of political instability across the political and media spheres before and after the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, and prior to the UK's vote to exit the European Union. Looking first at a selection of political speeches, the chapter finds those politicians opposed to independence construct constitutional change as impending crisis, whereas speeches from a pro-independence position articulate the pursuit of a new political settlement and crisis aversion at an EU and international level. In a media context, the Scottish newspapers, all of which were opposed to independence, emphasise the threat of upheaval, and extend the crisis frame onto coverage of the economy and the National Health Service. Overall, while explicit references to crisis were comparatively across amongst politicians and media, the chapter suggests the tactical use of a "crisis" frame is an important component of political discourse in times of constitutional uncertainty.

Introduction

Using examples from the Scottish political and media realms, this chapter looks at political discourse in the management of political instability. On 18 September 2014, a referendum was held in Scotland to decide whether it should remain within the United Kingdom or become an independent country. This referendum was organised by the Scottish National Party (SNP): a left-of-centre nationalist party with a governing majority in a devolved Scottish parliament in Edinburgh, routinely referred to as "the Scottish government". The referendum asked whether the devolved arrangement – in place as a result of a prior referendum in 1999 – should be extended to full

independence. While the option for independence was defeated by 55 per cent to 45 per cent, the aftermath saw a sharp rise in membership for the independence-supporting Scottish National Party and decline in support for the anti-independence Conservative and Labour parties. In partial consequence, debate on the democratic configuration of Scotland continued after the referendum. The Scotland of this period presents the peculiar combination of political circumstances that Gramsci (1971: 210) describes as an "organic crisis", in which conventional political allegiances and loyalties are cast into doubt, with potential implications for the on-going political settlement.

In the particular case of Scotland, the basis of any organic crisis emerges partially from a dispute over the legitimacy of national identity. Much of Gramsci's (1971: 20) thinking on national identity concerns its role as an instrument for winning consensus. In advanced economies, this hinges on the maintenance of a "national popular", where nation is articulated with a discursively constructed popular will (Gramsci, 1995: 256). Yet the discourses of crisis that we will see in the Scottish case are far more fluid than a straightforward struggle for ownership of a free-floating national sentiment. Hay (1996: 254-255) suggests that such political crises "are constituted in and through narrative", with political power exercised in influencing which narratives come to dominance. Under the threat of constitutional reconfiguration, the iterations of crisis we see in this chapter amount to competing responses to "a moment and process of transformation" (Hay, 1996: 255). As we proceed, we will examine a number of diverse mobilisations of crisis, ranging from impending threat to conflicting interpretations of national political belonging, showing how a variety of competing political voices respond to different phases of the constitutional insecurity.

Language and national/political identity

The last two decades have seen a bourgeoning interest in the language of Scottish political news. Much of this has drawn upon what Billig (1993) refers to as "banal nationalism" in seeing news

language as fundamental to the everyday acknowledgement of national belonging. One line of research identifies an implicitly agreed "common sense geography" at the heart of political coverage, in which descriptions of place use national proximity to assert relevance, in a manner that often leaves the nation itself tacit (Higgins, 2004a). For example, the headline "Met Office warn of more heavy downpours in north-east as shopkeepers try to recover" (Hebditch, *Press and Journal*, 2016) expresses an internally-conceived notion of the Scottish national space in which it is commonly agreed that the "north-east" refers to Aberdeen and its surroundings within an implicitly settled shared space.

In an analysis that also extends beyond political content, Douglas (2009) highlights language that is recognisably "Scots" in newspapers, thereby inviting readers into a vernacular community. The Scottish *Daily Record* headline "Tyra Banks tries to help folk get work [,] but cracks up Scottish twitter with her 'jobby' accident" (Jackson, *Daily Record*, 2016) sets out using a recognisably informal register in the affectionate description "folk", but restricts the address to those familiar with "jobby" as Scots slang for excrement. These kinds of textual practice also accord Scots language with particular types of connotation: authentic and spontaneous, rather than formal and decorous. In a manner that continues to the present, Douglas (2006: 32) suggests that Scots words "came to be viewed as homely and domestic, and not suited to high style writing or serious prose", expressing familiarity over the stilted expression of authority.

In terms of its political purpose, Laclau's (1977) conceptual discussion of national belonging in discourse emphasises its plasticity in adapting to the contours of various ideologies and arguments. Particularly where various configurations of state identity vie for position, political subjectivities and relations become articles of contestation: most notably in the relation between the government and people. Often, the tacit subtlety of "banal nationalism" (Billig, 1993) can be temporarily surrendered to an emphatic rhetoric of common cause. Moffitt (2015) stresses the political expression of

"populism" as the central political discourse in the construction of crisis in particular, directing its energy towards alienating the elite from the people, whereas others argue that discourses of nation are more commonly used as tools of political expediency (Higgins, 2004b).

Method

In examining some dominant discourses from the Scottish political realm, the chapter will therefore look at various discourses of impending crisis; at how these alter to accommodate various political circumstances, and across a number of platforms. By examining the rhetorical construction of political crisis narratives this particular context, the intention is to further expand our understanding of crisis as a form of motivated social practice (see introductory chapter, this volume; chapter 2, this volume). We will find that rather than labelling political conditions as "crisis" explicitly, the conditions of transition and destabilisation (Hay, 1996) are mobilised within associated discursive fields of threat, drawing upon such terms as "chaos" in following politically-motivated narrative themes, or "active frames" (Nord and Olsson, 2013). In Iyengar's (1991: 2) terms, such a crisis frame is "episodic", such that it pervades political discourse on constitutional tumult, even though it comes to and retreats from dominance across a variety of distinct news agendas.

The chapter will examine a variety of platforms: political speeches, newspaper reports and political leaflets. In addition to showing the variety of settings for such interpretations, this expands upon Dekavalla's (2016) suggestion that the tactical use of frames in the press in particular influence the direction of the referendum coverage towards policy dispute and cross-party competition. Speeches used are selected on the basis of their prominence in political discourse, with a concentration on those set-piece party speeches that express party philosophy and intended policy direction. Newspaper reports are sourced using the keywords "referendum" and "crisis" in LexisNexis and Clipshare across 2014 and 2015.

The analysis will call upon a range of methods, appropriate to the forms under discussion, including elements of political rhetorical analysis for the speeches (Atkinson, 1984; Martin, 2014), and critical discourse analysis for newspapers and political leaflets (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2015). Across all of the sections to come, the chapter is concerned with highlighting the texts under discussion as strategic political activities, and will be alert to tactics of subjectivity and lexical choice and their implication in reproducing relations of power. Language is therefore considered a "social practice", both complicit in and constitutive of forms of dialogue, identity and expressive power (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; see also introductory chapter, this volume).

The chaos of constitutional uncertainty

As we have noted, one of the ways in which political dispute is manifest is by contesting the core elements of the political lexicon, including national belonging and state identity (Higgins, 2004a; Higgins, 2004b; Dekavalla, 2016). In what Fairclough (1995: 98) refers to as a generative "configuration of discourses", frames associated with political upheaval invoke a cluster of associated terms predicated upon loss of control and the onset of chaos; as Hobbes (1996: 233) puts it, the reduction of order to "the first chaos of violence". Associated notions of disorder extend beyond the existential imperilment of the nation itself and onto the economy and other areas of policy management. This Conservative leaflet from the 2015 general election offers an example of such associations operating at the UK level:

(Figure 1. Conservative Party leaflet, 2015 general election)

This leaflet has the implicit threat of crisis at its core. In its visual arrangement, as the eye is invited to move across the virtues of the Conservatives to be met by the maladroitness of their opponents,

setting the contrast between a shambolic opposition and those responsible politicians determined that turmoil be averted and competence reign. The gap between calm authority and hapless disarray is also celebrated in the choice and arrangement of photographs, where the authoritative administration of a cabinet in "synchronised action" (van Leeuwen, 2001: 96) on the Conservative side, clashes with an array of disproportioned headshots on the other. In the bottom strapline of each section, the reader meets a direct address as either beneficiary or victim of the politicians illustrated above. Of course, for our purposes what is particularly significant about this leaflet is the prominence of Scottish nationalism in its gamut of political recklessness; expressed in the outsourced voice of a newspaper headline as the implied beneficiaries of Labour "plotting" – a "plot" implying a secret and malevolent plan – and personalised in the pictured Alex Salmond using the criminal lexicon of a "ransom" demand.

As we alluded to above, the theme of chaos produces what Nord and Olsson (2013) describe as an "active frame" within political discourse, across a variety of platforms. The continued rise in the popularity of the Scottish National Party even after defeat in the independence referendum left the danger of UK disruption in place, sustaining the associated frames. In a speech dated 12 March 2015, six months after the referendum, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson says of new SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon:

Extract 1

1   The SNP's financial plans would mean chaos for Scotland and chaos for the UK. The

2   First Minister would rather our children and grandchildren pay off our debts than

3   deal with this problem now. She has no plan whatsoever – absolutely no idea and no

4   ambition to deal with the deficit, and that's utterly irresponsible. Nicola Sturgeon is

5   a chip off the old block – she released her inner Salmond today. Instead of facing up

6   to the hard facts, she responds with aimless anger and bluster. She even appeared

7   to be relieved that Scotland wasn't independent or fiscally autonomous – quite an

8   admission from the leader of a party whose sole aim is to rip Scotland out of the UK.

This has some of the qualities of informality described by Fairclough (1995: 145) as the populist tactic of "conversationalisation", although the description of Sturgeon as "a chip off the old block" (line 5) is associated with the popular lexical field of Britain rather than that of Scotland. The extract also contains the amplification associated with spoken political rhetoric ("absolutely no idea … even appeared … quite an admission", line 3, lines 7-8) (Montgomery, 1999: 7). Importantly, the key theme of "chaos" is explicitly aligned with both Scotland and "the UK" (line 1), the possible separation of which is later expressed using the symbolic violence of "rip" (line 8).

Similar versions of this theme of impending crisis colour discussion of the aftermath across the two main UK parties and their representatives in Scotland. In July the same year, also after the referendum, former Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown delivered a speech saying:

Extract 2: quoted in Peterkin and Maddox, 2015

1   Remember what the SNP used to say – the referendum was once in a generation,

2   then it changed a little to once in a lifetime, then it was once every 15 years and now

3   when you ask Ms Sturgeon about this her answers are all evasion. She cannot give a

4   straight answer to the question. And I say I don't want the divisiveness, I don't want

5   the bitterness, I don't want the acrimony, I don't want the divisions between families

6   and communities in the next few months that we had in the past few months. When

7   you vote on May 7, remember that you are not just voting to end Tory austerity and

8   the possibility of five more years of the bedroom tax and everything else, you're also

9   voting on whether you are going to allow the SNP to use your vote to try to force a

10   second referendum on this country within a few months or after the 2016 Scottish

11   Parliament elections

In the terms preferred by Brown, underlying chaos is expressed in terms of the shared perception of a breach of trust ("Remember what the SNP used to say", line 1). First, the agency of the SNP is asserted in a shared mock-reminiscence on the party's past pledges, before developing this into a list of concerns in which Brown repeats " I don't" (lines 4-5) to stress his disaligment from a menacing lexicon of rancour – "bitterness", "acrimony" – encroaching the relational, trust-invested collectives of "families and communities" (lines 5-6); calling emphasis to the extent of his worry by adding one to the conventional rhetoric of the "three part list", thereby shifting into a related technique of talking over "invited" applause (Atkinson, 1984: 64, 99).

Contesting crisis in political speeches: from imperilling the UK to UK irresponsibility

Even this brief look at the Conservative and Labour rhetoric shows that notions associated with constitutional instability, and the discourses of chaos that stem from that, established an abiding theme in the institutional political rhetoric, playing a key role in discussion of Scotland's potential exit from the United Kingdom. It is therefore worth examining the extent of the tactical use of themes associated with crisis featured in the communications of the three major Scottish political parties. We will do this by looking across their leaders' speeches in the year following the referendum, which coincided with the UK general election. All speeches are delivered to an audience of party members, and those speeches that are transcribed from recordings rather than published transcripts will include pauses and points of emphasis.

This first speech is from Scottish Labour Leader Kezia Dugdale, representing a party that is opposed to the constitutional upheaval of Scotland's becoming independent. The key extracts are as follows:

Extract 3

1   and we had the devastating election defeat in 2011 (1) I was as surprised as anyone (0.5) to

2   be elected to the Scottish Parliament (2.5) part of an intake where we had lost some of our

3   best people (2) an again (0.5) this year (1) we are trying to move on from an awf:ul outcome

4   (1) not just in Scotland but across the whole (0.5) of the United Kingdom (2.5) because as Ian

5   said we can't (0.5) ever (0.5) forget (0.5) that the purpose of this party is to govern (1) and

6   every day out of power (1) is a day lost in the fight against poverty (0.5) injustice a:nd

7   inequality

8   […]

9   In Scotland we have a government (0.5) as I said (0.5) that is presiding over failing standards

10   in our schools and our hospitals (3) a government who have governing as a second priority

11   (1.5) opting instead to carry on an argument the vast majority of Scots (0.5) don't want to

12   have all over again (2) and this has consequences (1) it means difficult decisions delayed (0.5)

13   progressive choices dismissed and tragically (1) a lack of political will (0.5) to use the powers

14   (0.5) that we have (0.5) in the Scottish Parliament (3) and we have a strengthened Tory Party

15   (1) with a majority (1) not just pushing through policies that hit the poorest (1.5) but

16   damaging the prospects (0.5) of the vast majority (2) people who get up go out and do the

17   right thing (1.5) punished with lower incomes by a government intent on dismantling as

18   much of what the last government put in place (3) from tax credits and trade union rights

19   (0.5) to the Human Rights Act and the Welfare State the Tories seem intent on demolishing

20   all the parts of Labour's legacy that don't require a bulldozer (2) and conference you don't

21   have to look much further (0.5) than the major issues of the day (1.5) to see that David

22   Cameron will rest at <u>nothing</u> (0.5) for a quick boost in the polls (2.5) after the referendum he

23   marched in Downing Street (0.5) and announced English votes for English laws (2) rewriting

24   our constitution for political gain (0.5) while the votes were still (0.5) being counted (0.5) in

25   the referendum

Where the extract begins, Dugdale situates the speech within a crisis-related frame of unprepared-for trauma, starting with recent electoral setbacks in the Labour Party. These travails are implicitly situated within the Scottish political space, however, where the "election defeat of 2011" (line 1) is presented without the necessity of a "Scottish election" designation, acknowledging the knowing community of a Scottish political audience. In common with the extract from Gordon Brown, these troubles are expressed in the terms of personal investment and upset, emphasised in the modifier "devastating" (line 1). Further markers of commitment are emphasised, including a stress on "awf:ul" (line 3). Indeed, this description provides a bridge from local party difficulties to Labour's preferred constitutional arrangement of the British state, where the threatened division of state is highlighted in the tactically-stressed formulation "the <u>whole</u> (0.5) of the United Kingdom" (lines 4-5).

The second part of the extract situates this predicament as one centred on the sitting Scottish government (the SNP) and its commitment to disrupting the UK settlement. Through this section (from line 9), a rhetorical opposition is set between the inclusive address of the listening audience, and "a government" further externalised by the repeated use of the indefinite article. The governing party's negligence is then expressed as a conventional three-part list (Atkinson, 1984: 57) ""difficult decisions delayed (0.5) <u>progressive</u> choices dismissed and tragically (1) a lack of political will (0.5) to use the powers (0.5) that we have", lines 12-14). Similar neglects are highlighted in the political

project of a "strengthened" Tory Party at UK level (line 14), the malign intent of which is subject to

rhetorical amplification (Martin, 2014) ("not just …. But damaging the prospects", lines 15-16).

Finally, the accusation of constitutional irresponsibility first directed towards the SNP and their

projected break-up of the UK, is extended to the Conservatives by calling upon selected items from

the popular and political lexicon to assert opportunism ("quick boost at the polls", line 22).

From the party just accused by Dugdale of contributing to constitutional crisis, this next speech by

Scottish Conservative Leader Ruth Davidson also expresses a position in support of the union. In the

case of Davidson, however, we see explicit parallels drawn with crises of the past:

Extract 4

1   Conference, I was born in the winter of discontent. My first vote was at the 97 election. I was

2   a spotty 18 year old in my first year of uni. And my friends told me that our student union

3   had a special late license so we could all go, drink through the night and watch the results

4   come in. What they didn't tell me, was that the bar had been booked by the university

5   Labour club. And that I would be the only Tory amid a hundred baying lefties as seat after

6   seat fell. I think you're supposed to call it 'character-building'. It was bloody awful. Losing

7   always is. I know, I'm a Scottish sports fan.

8
       […]
9

10   Most of all, Ladies and gentlemen, it means a country led by a party – the only party – of the

11   Union. A party that will always back Britain and fight to keep us together. It's worth

12   remembering conference, that last year if just 200,000 people had changed their votes, our

13   country would now be suing for divorce. The United Kingdom would have ceased to be. We

14   must never come so close again. The SNP are already calling for a re-run and the storm has

15   not passed.

Having recently taken on the role of leader, Davidson begins her speech with a passage of

autobiography, in which she includes a reference to political upheaval of the year of her birth, the

1978 "winter of discontent" – the crisis narrative around which has been discussed by Hay (1996) –

together with its explicit contradiction with the supposed spring of the Thatcher years that followed.

This call for common cause through a shared memory of trauma extends from the experience of

Conservative defeat "at the 97 election" (line 1). This lexical component of this performed

commonality continues in Davidson's retreat into the mild-taboo phrase "bloody awful" (line 6) to

compare her feelings of political loss with her parallel identity as a "Scottish sports fan" (line 7),

thereby associating her political sentiments with a popular national pride, although a reassuring and

more broadly accessible linguistic community of middle-class informality is also invoked in the use of

the informal abbreviation "uni" (line 2). However, Davidson's default political centre is the United

Kingdom: and as well as the reference to the UK-wide crisis of 1978, and in contrast to Dugdale, the

election is marked by year rather than national setting and refers to the British rather than Scottish

election ("the 97 election", line 1). Metaphor is also deployed in the cause of rancour and

destabilisation applying the aggressive and relationally-destructive "suing for divorce" to the

argument for independence (line 13). In keeping with a sustained frame of impending crisis, the

weather metaphor "the storm has not passed" (lines 14-15) is then used to warn that any peril

continues.

Having looked at how the sustained discussion of Scotland's place in the United Kingdom produces discourses around impending crisis from the Scottish Labour and Conservative leaders, we will now look at two extracts from pro-Scottish independence SNP leader and Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon. The first of these is from her spring party conference speech of March 2015. As head of the party that instigated the referendum on independence, Sturgeon speaks on behalf of that Scottish government said to have occasioned that crisis implicit in the speeches of her opponents. The extract that follows is indicative because it opposes the discourses of constitutional uncertainty threatening the UK that we have seen prevail to this point:

Extract 5

1   Because here's the thing (2) when these (0.5) politicians outrageou:sly (1) described the

2   prospect of the SNP <u>winning</u> a general election in Scotland (1) as some kind of threat to

3   democracy (3) we they mean (1.5) is that we pose a threat (1.5) to their (.) vested (.) interests

4   (9) we pose a threat (.) to the <u>notion</u> of democracy that has them turn up for an election (2)

5   once every five years (1) and take Scotland for granted (0.5) the rest (0.5) of the time (2) we

6   challenge (0.5) a parliamentary system (0.5) that has more members in the unelected House

7   of Lords (1) than in the elected House of Commons what a democratic outrage (0.5) that is

Sturgeon begins with an unsympathetic rehearsal of the terms of the uncertainty said to beset the Scottish state. The intended effect is one of diasyrmus – the disparaging of an opponents' arguments (Lanham, 1991) – although this rests upon Sturgeon's own hostile interpretation. An emphasis on the adverbial form of "outrage" stresses Sturgeon's annoyance at her opponent's attitude (line 1), before its nominalised form of "democratic outrage" (line 7) is used to characterise

the existent United Kingdom parliamentary arrangement. While the sincerity of this passage is also anchored in its use of informal language, markedly by prefixing the stretch of speech with the colloquial idiom "because here's the thing" (line 1), in the shift from discussion of her opponent's argument to their motive, Sturgeon moves from an informal to a formal register, in a manner that associates the UK political establishment with an idiom of political cynicism ("vested interests", line 3). This transformation turns on the three-part repetition of "threat", where the conversational and deliberately imprecise "some kind of threat" (line 2) contrasts with the formal precision of "pose a threat (1.5) to their (.) vested (.) interests" (line 3) (Atkinson, 1984: 57).

In the above extract 5, we see how prevailing themes of uncertainty are redirected: Sturgeon claims that any impending catastrophe is caused by unwillingness amongst the unionist establishment – including the preceding Labour and Conservative parties – to bend to the electoral will. In this following extract, from Sturgeon's October party conference speech, the energy of imminent crisis is intertwined with other political concerns of the SNP's choosing:

Extract 6

1   Friends, last week David Cameron had the audacity to claim that his government stood

2   against poverty, inequality and discrimination. Well let me offer some home truths to the

3   prime minister. You don't fight poverty by hammering the incomes of the lowest paid. You

4   don't fight inequality by repealing the Human Rights Act and attacking the freedoms of trade

5   unionists. And you certainly don't fight discrimination by having a Home Secretary whose

6   views on immigration are indistinguishable from those of Nigel Farage.

7   […]

8   Conference, let us call again today on the UK to do more, as part of a co-ordinated European

9   response, to deal with this humanitarian crisis. And let us pledge again that Scotland stands

10   ready and willing to play our full part. Friends, what we should certainly not do in Syria is

11   make matters even worse.   The motivation for UK military action appears to be based on a

12   need to do something, rather than any real consideration of whether the action proposed

13   will make a positive difference. This question has not been answered - when airstrikes by US,

14   Russian, Arab, Turkish and French forces have not brought this multi-layered conflict closer

15   to a resolution, what possible grounds are there for believing that adding UK airstrikes will do

16   so? The risk is that they will simply add to the already unimaginable human suffering. What

17   is needed is not more bombing, but a renewed and intensive diplomatic initiative, led by the

18   UN, to seek a lasting resolution of the conflict and defeat the horror that is ISIS. Friends, It is

19   for these reasons that the SNP will oppose UK airstrikes on Syria. Conference, at a time

20   when sovereign countries need to work together to resolve issues of such magnitude, the

21   prospect of UK withdrawal from the EU seems even more misguided. Let us be clear. We

22   reject utterly the parochialism and the xenophobia of UKIP. And we despair at the failure of

23   leadership of a Prime Minister pandering to eurosceptics in his party, but unable to articulate

24   clearly and precisely what it is he is seeking to renegotiate. David Cameron might play fast

25   and loose with our place in Europe. But be in no doubt - the SNP will campaign positively for

26   Scotland, and the U.K, to stay in the European Union.

One of the goals of any mediated speech is to manage a para-social, and at times emotional,

relationship with the listeners, "double-articulating" across the audience in the hall and towards a

wider public (Scannell, 1991); a task made all the more important in a policy response to a

"humanitarian crisis" (line 9). In a study of classical political speeches, Adams (1978) suggests

"conventions of naming" are used to shift between levels of formality, tone and obligation. Here,

we see Sturgeon address her words to "friends" when seeking emotional unity against an opponent

(line 1), refusing an unpalatable line of action (line 10), and highlighting a motive as laudable (line 18), but switching to the formal/institutional "conference" to assert the policy direction of "co-ordinated European response" (lines 8-9) and in mobilising the political lexicon of "sovereign countries" and "resolution" to describe her the party position on the European Union (lines 19- 21). To those outside the consensus implied in this address, the speech links the economic policy of Sturgeon's Conservative opponents with the symptoms of domestic crisis, rendered again in a list of three, but using the technique of anaphora to prefigure the successive items with an accusatory "You don't" (line 3, line 4), culminating in a third item asserting the Conservatives' common cause with a well-known and implicitly stigmatised right-wing politician, Nigel Farage (line 6).

What then follows through the second part of the extract is a complex and fluid expression of belonging that switches between a Scottish and UK position, and their agency in respect of crisis aversion. The first is straightforward enough, where the UK is the externalised subject of a "call" to action from the conference (line 8), before a formalised "pledge" is offered on behalf of a "Scotland [that] stands ready" (line 9-10). The boundaries of inclusion then move outwards from Scotland to the UK as the actions in Syria are expressed using an inclusive "we" and defined as "UK military action" (lines 10-11). The purpose of these concentric circles of inclusion then becomes apparent, as Scotland's place within the UK underwrites the SNP's legitimacy in opposing UK action (line 19) and provides the basis for their emphatic distancing from "the parochialism and the xenophobia" (line 22) Sturgeon ascribes to UKIP, lent rhetorical emphasis on behalf of the listeners in "let us be clear". From this broader standpoint, an emphatically political lexicon is deployed to associate Sturgeon with the aspects of the policy of her moderate opponents (see extract 3), where she pledges to "campaign positively" for the UK to overcome what are presented as its parochial anti-EU impulses, thereby warding off potential crises in a broader EU setting.

Importantly, Sturgeon does not reject a crisis frame, but rather adapts this to her own purposes. What we see in Sturgeon is a tactical direction of crisis from the constitutional status of Scotland in the UK to the attitude of the UK towards the Scots democratic will, as well as the performance of wise counsel on UK conduct on the international stage.

Crisis and constitutional distractions: the pre-referendum press

While it is clear that a crisis frame is part of the discourse of politicians, it does not necessarily follow that this will feature elsewhere in the mediated public sphere. This section and the one that follows will therefore offer a parallel examination of those discourses of crisis to emerge in the press coverage in the approach to the 2014 referendum and in the period afterwards.

Having already seen how contesting interpretations of chaos and the danger of crisis are deployed in political speeches, we find that in common with the discourse of politicians, explicit references to "crisis" are comparatively rare in press coverage. However, those instances of crisis to arise provide the basis for the pursuit of significant political agendas. What follows is an example from London-based newspaper *The Guardian*, in which we see the characteristics of "organic crisis" of the state (Gramsci, 1971: 210) emerge in a setting of constitutional uncertainty:

Extract 7: Carrell and Watt, The Guardian, January 11, 2012.

1   [Headline] Salmond sets poll date - and defies London

2
        [Sub-headline] SNP leader says independence referendum will be held in 2014. Salmond sets
3
        poll date - and defies London
4

5   The SNP plans to hold its referendum in 2014. The United Kingdom was on track for a grave

6   constitutional clash last night after Alex Salmond pledged to defy an attempt by London to

7   block him from holding a referendum on Scotland's future on his own terms.

8
    Within minutes of a declaration in London that any attempt to hold a referendum on
9
    Scotland's future without the blessing of Westminster would be unlawful, the Scottish first
10
    minister unveiled plans to stage his independence poll in the autumn of 2014, the year of the
11
    700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn. "This has to be a referendum which is built in
12
    Scotland, which is made in Scotland and goes through the Scottish parliament," Salmond told
13
    Sky News. "If the Westminster government sticks to that, we won't have too many fights
14
    about it."
15

16   The chasm between London and Edinburgh indicates that Britain's prounion parties - the

17   Tories, the Liberal Democrats and Labour - are heading for an almighty clash with the SNP

18   over the future of Scotland. It will arguably be the UK's most serious constitutional crisis since

19   the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921, which led to the departure of the 26 counties of southern

20   Ireland from the UK. The crisis was triggered yesterday when the Scotland secretary, Michael

21   Moore, told MPs that the legal advice to the Westminster government stated that the

22   Scottish parliament has no legal authority to stage a referendum in any form.

Higgins (2004a) and Dekavalla (2012) argue that UK papers such as *The Guardian* are inclined to

centre on London and represent the Scottish interest as alien, marginal or even, as in this association

with a medieval Scots-English battle (line 10), laced with rancour. These deictic settings and their

significance are apparent in the first line, where the UK is offered as the context – and potential

victim – of a dispute between London and Edinburgh, incorporating the technical vocabulary of

politics within a violent metaphor in "constitutional clash" (line 5). This severity is reflected in the

lexical choice more broadly, with the crisis further amplified as "serious" in a direct historical comparison with an ominous early attempt at Irish independence in the "Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921" (lines 18-19).

However, the crisis frame is less straightforward in the Scottish press, where the print media produce a more subtle relationship between crisis and constitutional uncertainty. The following extract is from the *Daily Record*, the largest-selling domestic Scottish tabloid newspaper. Like all national newspapers in Scotland at that time, the editorial line of the *Daily Record* was against independence. This application of a "crisis" frame, stemming from the referendum, to the Scottish NHS, is apparent in the paper's editorial coverage:

Extract 8: Daily Record, May 28 2014.

1   [Headline] NHS crisis is a failure of SNP leadership;

2   [Sub-headline] RECORD VIEW says if the SNP invested as much time looking after the health

3   service as they do waging the referendum campaign then waiting time targets could be

     made.
4
     APPALLING A&E waiting times have been a thorn in the side of Health Secretary Alex Neil.
5
     Under his predecessor, Nicola Sturgeon, the heroic efforts of NHS staff had kept a lid on the
6
     damage done by increasing demand and scant resources.
7
     But since Neil took on the health brief - widely acknowledged as the toughest in the Cabinet
8
     - in 2012 the full scale of the problem has become abundantly clear.
9
     It is no coincidence that this is also the period when the SNP Government's focus has been
10   on the independence referendum to the detriment of everything else.

11 At the same time, the opposition at Holyrood have seemed happier bickering about the

12 constitution than doing their job of scrutinising the government.

13 That left it to the Daily Record to expose the chaos on the wards.

14 Back in January last year, our exclusive story about 84-year-old John McGarrity being left in a

15 freezing hospital corridor for eight hours because there were no beds showed that

16 something had gone very wrong.

17 Health managers and ministers initially insisted there was no crisis. But that was clearly

  nonsense, as all involved were subsequently forced to admit - largely thanks to pressure

18 from us.

19 Earlier this month, an Audit Scotland ¬investigation found waiting times on A&E wards have

20 got worse since the SNP came to power. An astonishing 100,000 Scots endured an

  unacceptably long wait last year alone.

21

22 And now statistics from Scotland's health watchdog show there has been little improvement.

23 The latest figures show 93.3 per cent of patients were seen within the target in March, down

  from 93.5 per cent in December.

24

25 Accident and emergency medicine in Scotland is still a story of agonising waits and missed

  targets. This is unacceptable.

26

  Despite repeated promises, SNP efforts to get to grips with the crisis have failed.

27

  Perhaps if they invested as much time into looking after the health service as they do waging

28 the referendum campaign, that would be different.

This column occupies the conventional editorial role as the voice of the newspaper, mobilising its

institutional authority and responsibility to its readers (Higgins, 2006: 33). The description of crisis

appears first in the headline (line 1) – where it is used to form the compound noun "NHS crisis" –

and then later in the text in the reported denial of the responsible authorities (line 16). Indeed, this

denial of "crisis" by the authorities ("Health managers and ministers initially insisted there was no

crisis", line 16) occasions a reassertion of the *Daily Record's* position that a crisis is in place ("but that

was clearly nonsense", lines 16-17). This editorial also invokes what we have described above as the

associated discourses of "chaos" (line 13). The urgency of tone is intensified by the use of hyperbole

in the description of the corridor as "freezing", and the elaboration of waits as "agonising";

juxtaposed to contrast the pained experiences of patients with the self-indulgence of those

responsible.

In keeping with the editorial tradition, the *Daily Record* positions itself as the bulwark against this

mismanagement, the conduct of which is dismissed in the markedly informal and purposively

trivialising description of their opponents as "happier bickering" (line 11). Addressed to both the

Scottish government and its opposition, the extract's concluding sentence expands on a construction

first offered in the sub-headline (line 3), and reasserts the contradictory interests of discussion over

the constitution in the disobligingly aggressive military metaphor "waging the referendum

campaign" (lines 27-28). These destructive activities are set in contrast with the effective and

focused management of the health service, described within a discourse of personal care in "looking

after" (line 27). Supplementing this intervention, the same paper's editorial from the following

month continues the "NHS in crisis" frame in its headline, while developing the story by drawing

upon the professional authority of the Chairman of the British Medical Association in Scotland (see

Daily Record, June 25 2014).

Thus, while crisis has only occasional association with the constitutional uncertainty wrought by the

SNP's wish to remove Scotland from the rest of the UK, its distribution through other news agendas

such as that of the NHS can invest crisis with a greater range of discursive powers, consistent with

the political and constitutional agendas of the newspapers involved, and in a manner that sustains the referendum within a crisis frame.

Discourses of neglect: crisis in the post-referendum press

Having examined press coverage in the run-up to the referendum, we now look to a selection of press coverage from its aftermath. In this, we see a continued use of crisis in ways that emphasise its adaptability. In common with the period prior to the referendum, reports of political institutions associate crisis and constitutional change. For example in an article headlined "Brown warns over second referendum", The *Scottish Sun* reproduces the reported speech of ex-Prime Minister Gordon Brown's that SNP success will occasion "chaos and constitutional crisis", as they use their increased power at Westminster "to force another referendum on Scottish independence" (Guy, 15 April, 2015). Just as before, therefore, a combination of crisis and constitutional upset arises in coverage of associated arguments between political parties.

More commonly, however, themes of crisis are sustained on the basis of their relationship with the everyday expectations and priorities of news and its audience. We have already referred to Hay's (1996) work on the production of crisis in the "winter of discontent", borne on the imagery of such tangible consequences as piles of uncollected refuse. Such commitment to the instincts of personal well-being also pervades this coverage. As the following extract from the *Scottish Daily Express* shows, the articulation between "NHS crisis" and the referendum sustains after the referendum in vivid terms:

Extract 9: Martin, *Scottish Daily Express*, 22 October, 2015.

1   [Headline] SNP HAS PUT THE NHS IN CRISIS;

2   [Sub-headline] 'We need change': Watchdog slams Government cash cuts 'After eight years

3   of SNP rule our NHS needs intensive care'

4   THE SNP has been accused of creating a crisis in the health service by cutting cash over the

5   past five years.

6   Critics rounded on the Government after a watchdog warned the NHS will no longer be able

7   to provide the same level of care.

8   Audit Scotland says the NHS is battling tighter budgets, rising costs, and higher demand,

9   while Government targets and soaring staff vacancies place a strain on NHS boards. Auditors

10   said the health budget fell by 0.7 per cent between 2008-09 and last year, with boards having

11   to raid savings and be bailed out with loans.

12   SNP ministers were also warned they were not making enough progress with their aim to

13   move more services into the community by 2020. The damning new report found: Seven

14   waiting times targets missed last year.

In common with the section above, this centres on the theme of NHS crisis. The article reports the

release of a critical dossier; expansively and suggestively named as "damning new report" (line 12).

Even in this post-referendum setting, it is the SNP and their attendant constitutional uncertainty that

is positioned as directly accountable. This is most explicit in the headline, ("SNP has put the NHS in

crisis", line 1), which asserts SNP agency in the production of disorder, and repeated as an indirect

attribution ("The SNP has been accused of creating a crisis in the health service...", line 4) referring

back to a "watchdog", later identified as Audit Scotland (line 7). The mood of wanton disorder is

also expressed through the lexical choices, such that the precision of the administrative register

("Auditors said the health budget fell by 0.7 per cent between 2008-09 last year", lines 9-10) sits

amidst a war metaphor sustained from "battle" (line 8) through to "raid" (line 11).

We can therefore see the extension of crisis from constitutional uncertainty to the overall administration of post-referendum politics from a government that continues to favour change. What is also significant in the previous article in the portrayal of tension in a strategic switching from formal to an informal tone: the challenges of "tighter budgets, rising costs and higher demand" (line 7) to the informal and personalised consequences of a "raid [on] savings" (line 10). Patrona (2006: 11) discusses such temporary switching to an informal register as a tactic towards aligning particular views with a form of language more in accord with the audience. Similar contrasts in language, lend colour to the irresponsibility of obstinate politicians, and feature throughout this following extract from the *Daily Record*:

Extract 10: Clegg, *Daily Record*, 20 November 2015.

1   [Headline] Scotland Bill heads for crisis as SNP and UK Treasury talks hit brick wall over fiscal

2   framework;

     […]

3

4   A Scottish Government team led by Deputy First Minister John Swinney have been in talks

     with the UK Treasury for weeks.

5

6   But the sides are at loggerheads over how Scotland's block grant from the UK will be

     calculated each year after income tax rates and bands are fully devolved.

7

     […]

8

9   Both the STUC and leading economist Professor Anton Muscatelli have warned that

     Scotland could be hundreds of millions of pounds worse off by the end of the decade if the

10   fiscal framework is not fair.

11   Muscatelli says the framework is "arguably even more important" than the Bill itself.

12   Scotland contributes less to UK spending (7.3 per cent) than its population share (8.3 per

13   cent). But Muscatelli points out that because of the dominance of London, that goes for

14   most parts of the UK.

15   First Minister Nicola Sturgeon yesterday repeated her warning that the SNP will reject the

16   whole package of powers if they don't like the terms of the fiscal framework.

17   She said: "Nobody, absolutely nobody - not even Labour - could reasonably expect any

18   Government to say anything else."

19   But the Tories claim that the SNP may be trying to wriggle out of the deal on powers

20   because they don't want to make the hard decisions that come with setting tax and

21   spending levels.

22   A UK Government source said: "We want a settlement which is fair to Scotland, fair to the

23   UK and built to last. That's why we rejected the SNP plan for fiscal independence - it was

    bad for Scotland.

24   "We have no interest in this becoming an annual row - we want it settled and Scotland

25   needs it settled. It is time to move on and debate how the powers are used.

26   "Scotland will only lose if the new powers are used badly.

27   "But used well, Scotland will be the winner."

As in the extract that preceded it, items from the political and formal economic lexicon are placed in

opposition to popular idioms and items of commonplace language. In this extract, however, the

expression of the dispute is largely outsourced, through the use of a series of extended directed

quotes, pitted against one another using contrastive links (most notably on lines 5 and 18). Contrary

to the conventional use of expert voices (Kruvand, 2012), much of the non-technical language is contained within the various external voices; to the extent that even the words of the economist Professor Anton Muscatelli are merely used in offering a straightforward comparison ("arguably even more important", line 11) to contextualise the figures and nuance elsewhere. Likewise, new First Minister Nicola Sturgeon's words are limited to a rhetorically-repetitive dismissal of her opponent's position ("Nobody, absolutely nobody – not even Labour...", line 17). In the attributed speech, too, the metaphor "wriggle out" attributed to the Tories gives way to "hard decisions" as expressed by the newspaper (lines 18-19). Even when a Scottish government spokesperson provides a direct quote acknowledging that "both sides are still far apart", this has already been summarised using the popular idiom "at loggerheads" (line 5). Of course, the structure and framing of the quotes is designed to provide evidence for the article's stance: concluding on a UK government recommendation ("But the Tories claim…", line 18).

The basis of the article is a policy-related party dispute over the "fiscal framework" (line 1-2, line 10, line 16), linked to "fiscal independence" (line 21). The formal economic status of "fiscal framework" is indicated by occasional inverted commas, but more markedly by its appearance in the headline in which it is presented as the backdrop for the post-referendum crisis (lines 1 and 2). In terms of the cultural proximity of this controversy, "Scotland" appears predominantly in the third person across the last seven lines of the piece, thereby rendering it more readily as the subject of economic fortune and depersonalised threat than a symbol of shared belonging. This engagement of crisis towards the economic realm continues in the following article from the *Scottish Daily Mail*:

Extract 11: Roden, *Scottish Daily Mail*, 20 November 2015.

1   [Headline] Treasury in crisis mode amid fears of SNP plot to scupper Scotland Bill

2   [Sub-headline and photo caption] Messy split: James McAvoy backs independence

3   GEORGE Osborne is drawing up an emergency strategy amid fears that Nicola Sturgeon is

4   preparing to derail a historic transfer of powers to Holyrood.

5   […]

6   Treasury bosses suspect Miss Sturgeon and her Finance Secretary John Swinney will refuse

7   to accept the necessary 'fiscal framework' before May's Holyrood election and then stand

8   on a manifesto pledge to secure a 'better deal for Scotland'.

9   That could delay plans to fully devolve income tax in time for April 2017, and trigger an

10 unprecedented constitutional crisis for David Cameron's government.

11 The framework is required to ensure Scotland's block grant from Westminster is cut by the

12 right amount once tax and welfare powers are devolved, leaving neither the Scottish

13 Government nor the Treasury worse off.

14 […]

15 But Miss Sturgeon warned earlier this year she would only recommend consent for the

16 fiscal framework if it was 'fair to Scotland'.

17 If MSPs refuse to endorse the Scotland Bill, Mr Cameron will have to decide whether to

18 press ahead against the wishes of Holyrood - which would be electoral suicide - or to re-

19 open negotiations.

20 The SNP, which is expected to comfortably win May's election, would be in a position to

21 argue it had a 'mandate' for a better deal.

22 […]

23 'The possibility of the SNP delaying this until after the election is being discussed.

24 'People are aware how political the SNP can be on things like this, and how they like to

25 create a Holyrood versus Westminster fight. 'Behind the scenes, John Swinney is trying to

26 make out there's some kind of intractable issue here that is the Treasury's fault, but

27   actually there is very little between the sides, so it comes down to the politics.' In the dying

28   days of the referendum campaign, pro-Union parties promised to hand more powers to

29   Scotland following a 'No' vote.

30   Under proposals drawn up by a cross-party group, chaired by Lord Smith of Kelvin, MSPs

31   will have control over all income tax rates and bands, worth nearly £11billion, and powers

32   to create entirely new benefits in devolved areas as well as to top-up all reserved benefits.

33   [...]

This article from the emphatically anti-independence *Scottish Daily Mail* foregrounds the mood of

impending crisis that has dominated much of this chapter. This is expressed first in the delay to

"plans" – presented as unattributed, although the broader context shows they are those of the UK

government – the failure of which are presented in a causal relation (to "trigger", line 9) with what is

unambiguously referred to as "an unprecedented constitutional crisis for David Cameron's

government" (lines 10-11). Risk of crisis is again expressed in positioning the Scots "MSPs" as

engaged in a rejection of positive action ("refuse to endorse", line 18), which would enable

productive activity from the UK Prime Minister ("press ahead", line 19; "re-open negotiations", line

20) in spite of the metaphorically amplified risk of "electoral suicide" (line 19). The article also

constructs the post-referendum crisis in terms of its production of economic catastrophe, the

destructiveness of the intervention implicit in the transport metaphor "derail" (line 4).

"Fiscal framework" remains a prominent item on the political agenda, appearing twice (line 8, line

17) with a further instance of "fiscal" (see line 12).   In this case, the article is weighted still further

with frequent items from the toolbox of economic policy, including "spending review" (line 16), and

the Scotland-specific "block grant" (line 12), as well as items from the political lexicon, such as

"mandate" (line 22). In common with the preceding Extract 10, the newspaper's own perspective is

also evidenced using an extended quote from an unnamed government spokesman (lines 24-28).

Also like the article above, the fewer appearances of "Scotland" are rendered in the third person

(see line 30), perhaps most tellingly when fiscal powers going to Scotland are further externalised to

"MSPs" (line 31). Even reference to Scots actor, James McAvoy's continuing support for

independence is expressed negatively as a "messy split" (line 2). Just as in the previous extract, this

Scottish Daily Mail article therefore emphasizes Scotland as the subject of capricious economic

fortune, worsened in the post-referendum context, than a community of belonging.

Conclusion

While it is clear that the constitutional uncertainty and party disalignment in Scotland amounts to a

constitutional crisis – existentially destructive in respect of the UK state and politically tumultuous in

terms of the parliamentary settlement – the place of crisis in the mediated coverage of politics over

this period is complex. The formal political institutions express the crisis in terms of chaos; dwelling

on its consequences on the political system and the experience of everyday life. The national

belonging that would normally provide the silent backdrop to the everyday is surrendered to what

Hay (1996) calls the "transformational" conditions in which a mood of crisis becomes the underlying

political discourse. The press, on the other hand, mobilise crisis not in terms of its association with

the political settlement, but in respect of the impact of political uncertainty on significant national

institutions and concerns. Prior to the referendum itself, this was focused on the National Health

Service, to be joined, subsequent to the referendum, by the health of the economy.

As Moffitt (2015) describes it, the mobilisation of crisis as a frame should be thought of as a political

tactic, produced as an attempt to associate political actors and institutions with what Wodak (2015)

refers to as the discursively-constructed fears of the people (see also chapter 4, this volume). The

particular case of Scotland produces diverse and conflicting centres of power towards which agency for crisis can be ascribed. The referendum takes national identity out of the realm of imagination and into the competing claims to government, with attendant opportunities for accountability and personal imperilment.

It may be argued that this mainly indirect and tactical re-expression of the conditions of crisis is consistent with the norms of formal political speech and the discharge of news values (see also introductory chapter, this volume). In a way that attests to the mediatizing influence of the priorities of the newsroom, it is significant that crisis frames are reengaged across various agendas; meeting the political conditions before and after the referendum, and mobilising a number of commonly-held concerns from the NHS to the economy. In the manner in which these "active frames" (Nord and Olsson, 2013) are pursued, there are parallels with recent research arguing that emotionally-charged, anti-authority forms of discourse exercise an increasing dominance over rational political debate (Wodak, 2015). Indeed, to the extent that persuasive political language benefits by avoiding direct association with the political lexicon, the concerns of the lifeworld are more immediately appreciable through ideas of chaos impacting on the necessary organisation of state administration and everyday life. What is of equal significance, however, is the extent to which a dominant mood of crisis can be contrarily directed for and against constitutional change, depending upon a tactical apportionment of culpability between the independence-seeking Scottish government and the United Kingdom state.

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