Education in Scotland and Norden: a match made in heaven, or wishful thinking
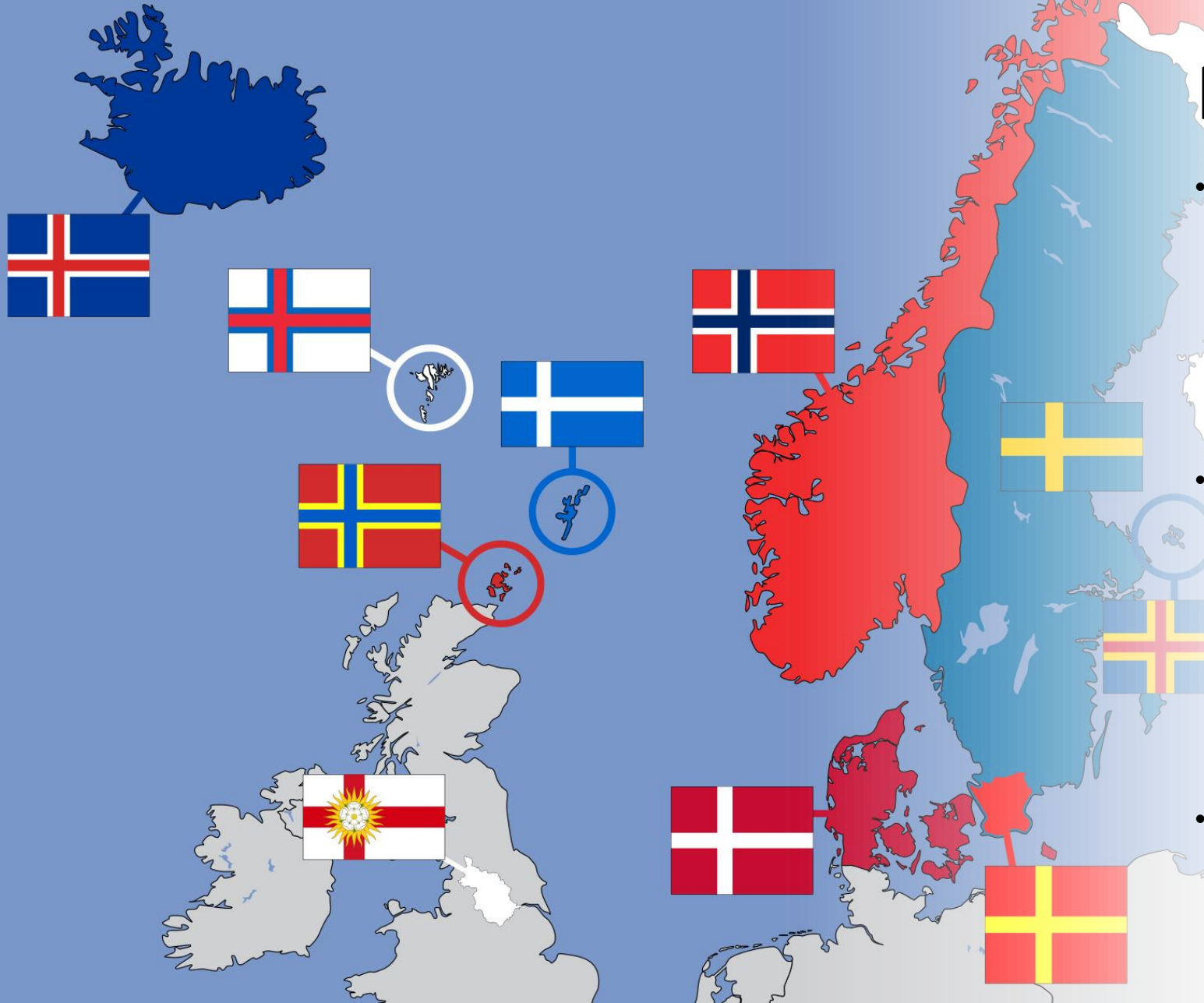
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Nordic States…?

- External assumptions about social, cultural, economic, and state-based solutions
  - Social, political, cultural and economic structures oriented around state provision, not that of the market or the reliance on familial support and wealth.
  - Nordic exceptionalism?

- Scandinavian system: centripetal-consensus (after Ljiphart, 1968, in Bengtsson *et al.* 2014,)
  - Political (compromise, social consensus, corporatism, and social engineering).
  - Welfare (or well-being?) (high taxation and high spending).
  - citizenship (activist, participatory and egalitarian).

- However, significant shifts since 1970s, especially across educational systems.

- Whisky, haggis, kilts, shortbread, rain, red-hair, golf, stone cities, mountains, seascapes.

- Scottishness is not static; it weaves and floats, morphing and shifting to encapsulate the very moments in time it seeks to both understand and influence.

- Scotland: 315 years in the making (Act of Union, 1707): an eclipsing of the 'Other' historic.

- Links and ties to 'the north': language, accent, history, custom…

- Links and ties to 'the south'…

- Education: independent yet 'positioned'.

Scottish politics – VERY briefly

- Since 2007, Scottish politics has:
  - Referenced outwards to Nordic and Baltic States.

- Not without historical and current exigencies:
  - Orkney and Shetland to Scotland from Norway – 1472.
  - Linguistic similarities: Orkney & Shetland Norn similar to Faroe Norn.
  - Orkney council votes to consider greater ties with Norway – 2023 (two members of the council fluent in Norwegian).
  - Historic alliances with traditional enemies of England, e.g., France.

- Since 1960s, SNP rhetoric has shifted from 'anti-England' to 'Civic-nationalism' – Scotland as a 'happening place'.

Scotland: A (very) brief history (from 1997): Part 1

Referendum: Scottish Parliament (74%; 64% tax raising powers)

• Also Welsh Assembly; NI Assembly

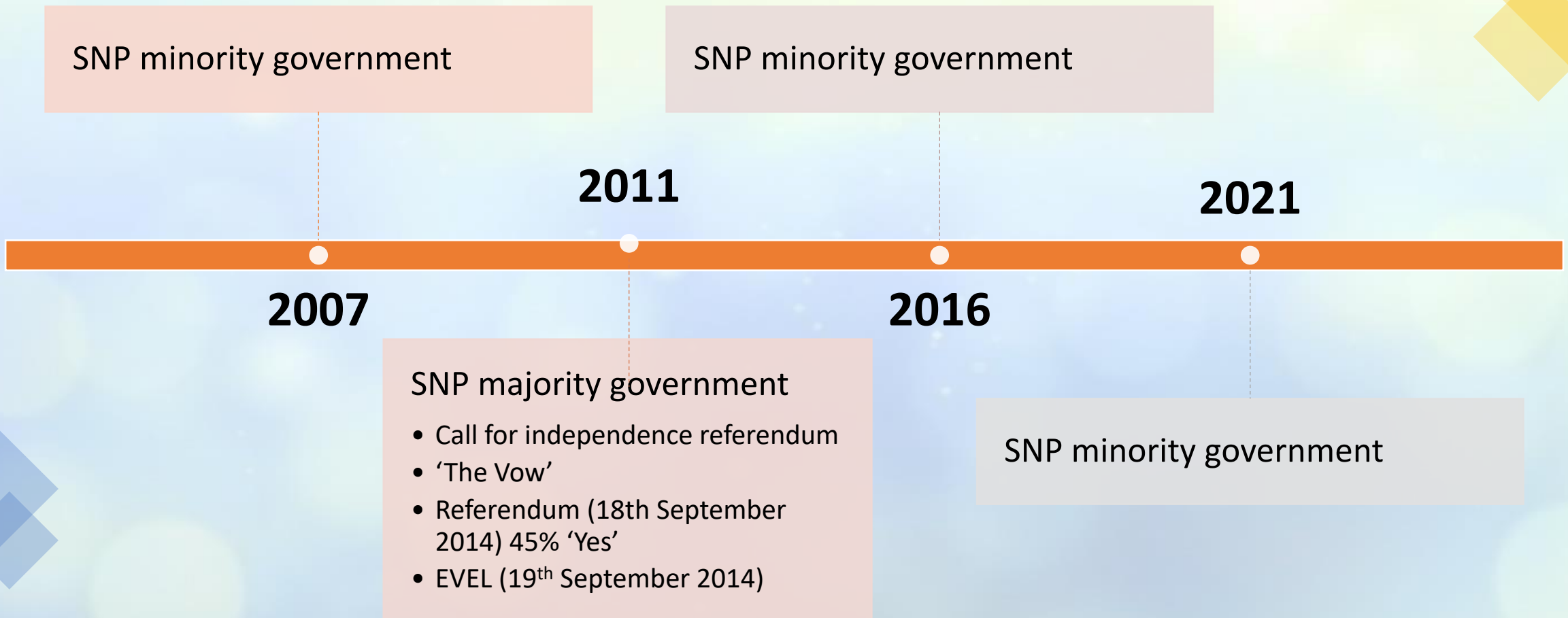National (education) Conversation

1999

2004

1997

2002–2003

Parliament opened (Labour/Liberal Democrat)

Curriculum for Excellence 3-18 (from 2010)

• Broad general education (to S3)
• Senior phase (S4 to S6)

The political position (Ny-Scot?)

Scotland is a diverse, multicultural society. This diversity strengthens us as a nation, and that's why it's so important that we tackle all forms of prejudice and discrimination. I take the view that anybody who chooses to live in Scotland - whether they and their families have been here for generations or whether they have come to Scotland very recently - is home.

(Sturgeon, 1st September, 2021)

Devolution…

- The UK container ascribes:

- Myriad political, cultural, and social constraints on Scottish observance not least through media representations of
  - SNP policy 'failure'
  - A denial of 'permission' for another referendum (endorsed by the UK Supreme Court)
  - That the 2014 referendum was 'once in a lifetime'.
  - That Scotland survived the Covid-19 pandemic due to UK financial aid
  - That Scotland's desire to re-join the EU could not be realised upon independence.

- Naïve assumptions about 'Britishness':
  - A tiered construct: English, then Scottish, then Welsh, then Northern-Irish.
  - English obsession with royalty, hierarchy, class, riches not realised across most of Scotland (probably excluding Edinburgh).

Devolution as problematic container

'Conceiving devolution as a granting-of-voice on these terms, I argue, tends to re-inscribe the containment logic of 1970s UK centralism, releasing/locking Scottish cultural production into reified postures of "representation" which leave uncontested the constitution of representative power.' (Hames, 2013: 204)

- A hegemonic form:
  - Shifts modes and acts of representation away from challenges to political Westminster elites.
  - Addresses modes of representation as 'fixes' to 'reduced democracy'.
  - Devolution (re)legitimates Westminster systems and assumptions; make them more palatable to Scottish opinion.

The 'legitimacy of independence'

- The model espoused by supporters of independence is probably a smorgasbord of
  - Historic interpretations, cultural tropes, romantic social visions, political norms, and economic selection.
- These are not redundant or superfluous
  - They reflect a normative construction for what independence supporters hope Scotland will become, allied to an observable 'reality'.
- Big-D/Discourses (after Gee, 2012) that:
  - Legitimate specific modes of representation
  - De-legitimise contrary modes, specifically those that seek to position Scotland in UK.
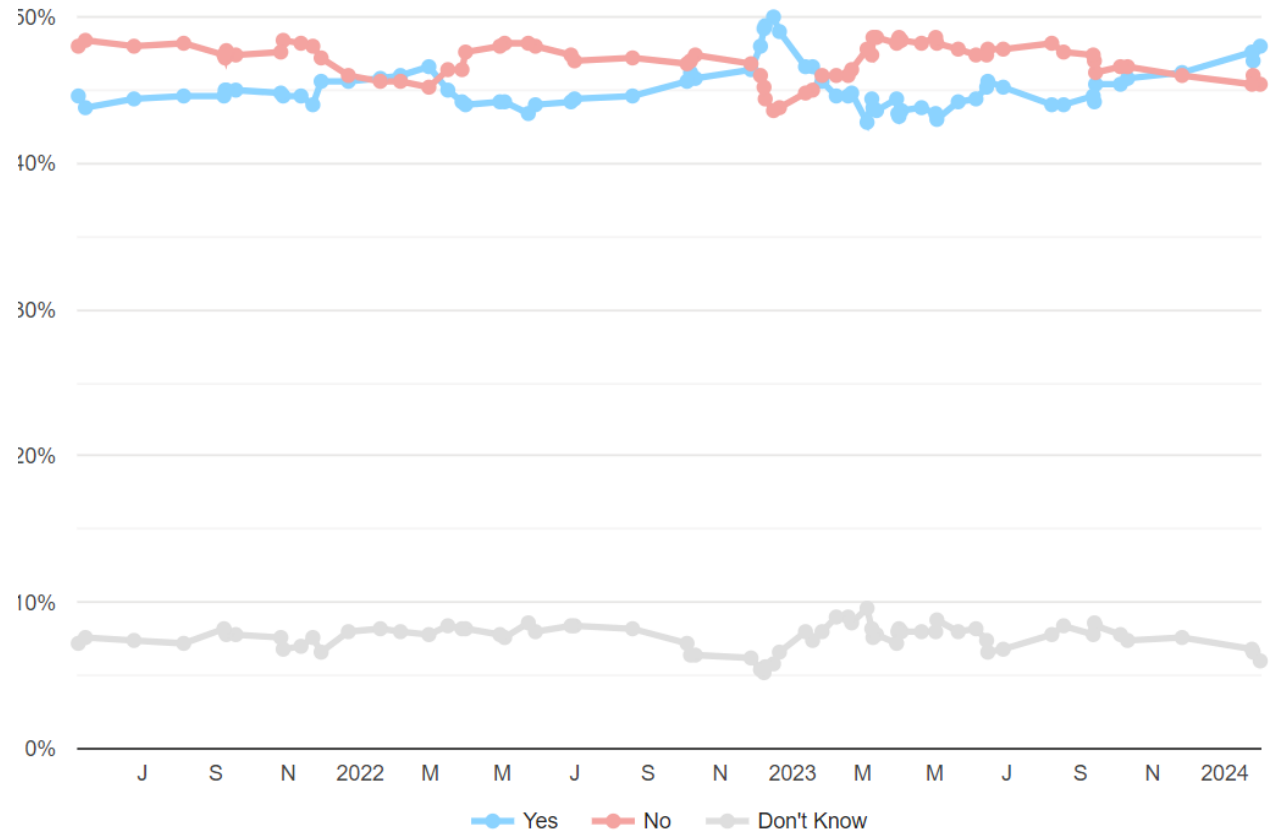
Source: Ballot Box Scotland

Educational Big-D/Discourses

- Education and 'Otherness':
  - Emphasises differences between Scottish and English systems.
  - Seek to address poverty and _redistribution_.
- Education and devolution:
  - Policy co-construction with local authorities (now challenged and challenging).
  - Experimentation (again, challenged).
- Education and independence – The Benign State
  - Competitive 'outward referencing'.
  - flourishing – the 'Well-being State'.
  - Democratic acceleration.

'Arctic Pedagogy'

Attempts to rupture traditional Anglo-phonic positions:

- From methods and practices, to…
- 'Being in and acting on the world, with and for others'.

Shifts in language:

- From periphery to 'centre'.
- From 'remote' to 'centre'.

New Storyline:

- From 'colonised' to 'leaders'
- From 'trickle-down' & 'levelling up' to 'fairness, equality, and human-centred'.

Any questions?