

Britishness and the Politics of Exclusion

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Abstract

The persistent question of whether Britishness is under threat has dominated British politics, and yet exploration of the nature of Britishness and its societal context is seldom highlighted. This paper explores the nature of Britishness today via secondary data analysis of secondary qualitative sources, organised into three key sections. Examining a variety of academic theoretical and empirical research, it firstly explores the historical foundations of Britishness before examining the process of devolution and Brexit as two key case studies. This paper also extends and develops theory from Arthur Aughey's (2010) work. While the theory originally intended to analyse Englishness or English nationalism, this paper extends the theory's application to Britishness, emphasising its benefit in the field of British politics and related disciplines as an imperative analytical tool to enrich wider empirical and theoretical analysis. Ultimately, this paper posits that Britishness today is often used as a political tool, which is detrimentally based on and enforces the politics of exclusion. However, in recognising its paradoxical and multifaceted complexity, it is recognised that Britishness also contains inherent subjectivities as related to ideas of belonging. Overall, although not seeking to argue that Britishness is wholly bad, this paper hopes to highlight damaging discourses and events associated with the use and construction of Britishness as an exclusionary tool today.

Keywords: Britishness, Englishness, Arthur Aughey and British Nationalism, the Politics of Exclusion in Britain, Britishness as a Political Tool

Introduction

This paper accepts the basic definition of Britishness from work by Paul Ward (2004: 2), who states that it is flexible, and revolves around ‘cultural and political identities associated with the existence of this [Britain] multi-national polity’. Ultimately, this paper argues that Britishness today can often present as an intangible set of elements based on – and enforcing – the politics of exclusion, and that it also has a multifaceted, paradoxical nature rooted within this type of politics. Importantly, this paper does not seek to argue that all aspects of Britishness are bad, as it recognises inherent subjectivities within Britishness. However, this paper also argues that while both subjective and academic epistemologies of Britishness have developed, due to the way that it is manipulated in political spheres in addition to its imperial history, Britishness as it exists today is often used as a deeply damaging and harmful exclusionary political tool.

As Ford (2008) powerfully points out, English and British nationalism are often conveyed via a paradoxical need to portray superiority versus a support for multicultural integration. As this paper will show in Sections I-III, while a complex debate, Britishness is often rooted in a deeply damaging sense of exclusion, which is both historical and ongoing. Section I explores its historical foundations as relating to colonialism and imperialism. Section II examines **devolution** and party politics as a key event that further revealed the nature of Britishness in addition to subjectivities within it, while also questioning who controls the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion regarding Britishness and British politics. Lastly, Section III explores Britishness via the polarising and othering instance of Brexit.

To argue the above points, this paper applies and extends arguments regarding the four types of ‘anxieties’ of absence, silence, anticipation and imitation, as outlined by Aughey (2010), which were initially intended to analyse *English* nationalism. Despite being an invaluable theoretical lens to explain the complexities of Englishness, at the time of writing, attempts to apply this aspect of his theory to also further explain the complexities of Britishness have remained surprisingly absent from the academic literature. In addition to providing more insight and context on Britishness as an almost intangible and

complex phenomenon, this paper seeks to address this gap in the literature, therefore conveying and elevating this ‘anxieties’ perspective as an extremely useful socio-analytical tool to examine and contextualise Britain today. To do this, this paper firstly outlines the key relevant aspects of Aughey’s (2010) work that this paper will use in its arguments to justify its relevance and application. It will then analyse Britishness using various key historical events and periods as previously mentioned.

Considering the above aims of this paper, alongside challenging the gaps in the literature, this paper also hopes to identify and consequently challenge foundations of xenophobia, scapegoating and exclusion seen in the UK. At the time of writing, the politics of exclusion occurs in a myriad of ways, with the current most explicit aspect seen via the exclusionary rhetoric directed towards asylum seekers, disabled people and those with lower incomes. Currently, this type of enforced marginalisation can also be seen via attempts to decrease welfare spending in multiple areas by the current government. In highlighting multiple areas of exclusion within the definition of Britishness, this paper seeks to provide key insight to, and therefore also challenge, the underlying discourse behind much law, policy and politics in the United Kingdom.

Aughey, anxiety and injustice

Aughey’s (2010) theoretical work is imperative in the analysis and evaluation of Britishness today. Although initially described by Aughey (2010) as one perspective to explain the complexities of English nationalism, in addition to **unionism** and ideas of an English Parliament, his work remains deeply invaluable in highlighting the complicated nature of Britishness. In relation to Aughey’s (2010) work, some related definitions must firstly be established. While a key aim of this paper is to establish what Britishness is, in contrast, Englishness is often simply referred to as English nationalism. In turn, nationalism is described as ‘a consciousness of national unity’ (Heywood, 2017:164), and subsequently often involves ideas of constitutional government and potentially patriotism (Heywood, 2017). English nationalism

therefore relates to this solely in the context of England, while British nationalism or Britishness refers to all countries within the union.

Interestingly, Aughey (2010) refutes the view that English nationalism is a movement, although he recognises that this may change, and instead defines it as a mood in line with his theoretical lens of 'anxieties'. Applying his work to Britishness is foundational in understanding current political, legal and policy contexts in the UK.

This paper refers to the four types of anxieties that Aughey (2010) argued are part of the mood of Englishness: absence, silence, anticipation and imitation. He argues that this is just one perspective that can explain the nature of English nationalism often described in academia and beyond. He also identifies multi-party politics and the Campaign for an English Parliament as two other key related perspectives that can be used to further examine Englishness (Aughey, 2010). While the latter two are interesting, this paper solely focuses on the 'anxieties' perspective as it deems it the most appropriate, although it does briefly explore related ideas while discussing devolution. Aughey (2010: 506) states that these four types of anxieties have a 'historical lineage' and exist due to the perception of a threat to the nation, but that they have also evolved over time alongside political events and globalisation. Ultimately, these anxieties are grounded in various forms of 'self-understanding' (Aughey, 2010: 507) and uncertainty, and thus have an element of subjectivity that this paper recognises in its application to Britishness. Overall, the anxieties are tied together via a theme of fear of the denial of Englishness as enforced by ongoing uncertainty of political identity in the face of threats to unity (Aughey, 2010). While Aughey (2010) does discuss Britishness, he focuses more on the increasing likelihood of the English to have concern with becoming trapped under an umbrella notion of Britishness, and thus losing their supposedly distinctive character. In some ways, Britishness is therefore seen as a threat to Englishness. Additionally, it is worth noting that this paper rejects Aughey's (2010) overall point mentioned above regarding the difference between a mood and a movement; the application of the prospect that Britishness is simply a 'mood' and not a

movement denies the possibility of accountability and systemic change in the face of its detrimental aspects.

The anxiety of absence refers to the fear that Englishness and the English people will cease to – or have ceased to – exist, or be erased by international and national communities (Aughey, 2010: 508–09). This paper applies this to Britishness regarding the historical foundations of Britishness, devolution and Brexit. The second anxiety, which Aughey (2010: 509–10) himself recognises has a major overlap with the first, is that of silence, which largely refers to a fear or suspicion of being silenced – for example, over **the English Question** and via ‘conspiracies’ that discredit or ignore Englishness. This paper applies this to Britishness in Sections I and II. The third anxiety is that of anticipation, regarding the supposed end of the United Kingdom, or unionism, which may result in the disappearance of Englishness, while bolstering the other nations (Aughey, 2010: 510–11). This paper applies this to Britishness briefly in the third section. Lastly, the fourth anxiety refers to imitation: the fear that the English have not asserted themselves in their own right, and that they have simply copied other nations in an attempt to be more likeable (Aughey, 2010: 511–12). This paper applies this to Britishness in Sections I and III. Overall, Aughey’s (2010) work is invaluable in providing a helpful framework to analyse what Britishness means today.

Section I: The historical and imperial foundations of Britishness

The most important underpinning of Britishness today is undeniably its historical foundations. The Acts of the Union that resulted in the formation of Great Britain were passed in the relevant parliaments in 1707 and 1801, at the same time that British imperialism and the slave trade were in full effect. Both imperialism and Great Britain are intertwined via the monarchy – particularly via Queen Elizabeth I, who granted rights to the East India Company to begin colonial trade, and who also had a Scottish heir, which was arguably a key factor in the formation of the union (Ward, 2004). In Ward’s (2004: 15) impressive work on Britishness, he states that the monarchy and imperialism

sought to 'perform the same function of forging Britishness'. Via analysis of the work of others such as P. J. Marshall (1995) and J. M. MacKenzie (2017), Ward argues that the link between imperialism and Britishness is clear via strong beliefs of superiority, exceptionality, loyalty to royalty and a strong sense of militarisation. Subsequently, he rightly points out that 'royal events were also imperial events' (Ward, 2004: 19), which inspired British popular support from each nation, and acted as a negative enforcement of Britishness. The monarchy remains a key aspect of British culture, and, in the words of Tom Nairn (2011: xii), 'royalty is an essential ingredient in maintaining the performance today' – the performance being the superiority of Britain. Applying this work, due to the history of the monarchy, royal events and tours tend to either be inherently imperialist or at least hint at imperialism. Ward's (2004) work is therefore key in portraying the continued links of imperialism and colonialism to the monarchy, and in conveying how both continue to persevere, via some events, to be elements of Britishness today.

Militarism and colonialism, as part of imperialism, are also argued to be inspired by irrational anxieties based on the fear of a threat (Nairn, 2011), which consequently relates to Aughey's (2010: 508–09) concept of the anxiety of absence regarding a fear of becoming less important in the international system. It is also in this sense that Britishness has been used to justify active destruction in the name of protection; the overwhelming element of British imperialism was justified partially on the basis of protecting various nations, and bolstering their existence, hence various leaders perceived imperialism as a form of protection and source of reassurance for their country. As Ward (2004) argues, each nation supported British imperialism to strengthen their own nation's interest. Evidently, this is based on an 'othering' process that inherently involves a sense of reassurance to the self via perceived control (Parvez, 2019), such as a leader to the nation. The imperialist foundations that bound, and continue to bind, Britain together therefore appear to have a dual nature when applying Aughey's (2010) work via application of the anxiety of absence; British imperialism was in some ways perceived as domestically 'comforting' in the face of a potential loss of control, yet also an evident

abomination that nonetheless resulted in the eventual breakdown of the British empire. The historical elements of militarism and colonialism, while utilising Aughey's (2004) work, are thus key in examining the roots of the politics of exclusion that underlie Britishness today.

While Ward (2004) only focuses on Britishness since 1870, this paper argues that analyses of imperialism before 1870 are also fundamental in examining the state of Britishness today. Many elements of current British culture are a result of the actions of the empire before 1870 (Sanghera, 2021). While perhaps it is unreasonable to expect Ward (2004) to cover the entirety of the imperial period in relation to Britishness, as Sathnam Sanghera (2021: 14) states in his wonderful yet harrowing book *Empireland*, '[...] our imperial past has had a [...] profound effect on modern Britain'. He points out that the etymology of words, 'British' companies, foods, institutions and elements of popular culture were robbed from countries during the entire imperial period. Most of British culture is therefore unsettling in nature; it consists of an amalgamation of stolen elements as enforced by the monarchy and imperialism that have become so ingrained that they are perceived as unique when, due to British history, it is impossible to have a singular, wholly unique, geographically bound British culture. This raises questions regarding the extent to which Britishness today can be defined in its own right. It is also clear here that, again, Britishness today is, deludedly, based on the underlying politics of exclusion. Aughey's (2010) argument regarding the anxiety of imitation, the fear of copying another nation, therefore also seems ironic; imitation is inherently ingrained within British – and therefore English – culture. While culture is, by definition, not static, Britishness has clearly not evolved in its own right due to its colonial historical origins, which challenges both Britishness today and the future of Britishness.

Alongside British culture, the British political system that still operates is also intertwined with the monarchy, and has its historical roots during imperialist times, which again questions the level of authenticity within Britishness today. For instance, the previous British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli approved Queen Victoria's title as the Empress of India (Ward, 2004). Others have

suggested that imperialism was simply the result of ‘gentlemanly capitalism’ (Cain and Hopkins, 1987) within a free market liberal economy and laissez-faire economics that continue to operate today. However, this argument appears to justify atrocities as based on objective ‘natural’ market forces, and consequently questions the economic context behind Britishness.

Furthermore, the democratic, equal and just liberal society that supposedly exists in the United Kingdom today is underpinned by the ‘fathers’ of liberalism. As argued by Eileen Sullivan (1983), key liberal figures such as J. S. Mill believed that India, for example, was inferior. She points out that J. S. Mill also actively encouraged Britain’s colonisation in India essentially under the premise of white saviourism and the belief that England’s method of governance was supreme (Sullivan, 1983). Interestingly Sullivan’s excellent paper also points out that unionism and thus Britishness itself was founded on the basis of imperialism, especially in relation to Ireland: the 1800 Act of Union inspired the belief that ‘Ireland would remain part of the United Kingdom and in that sense they countenanced the change in her position and the extension of the Empire’ (1983: 604). In this sense, Britishness is based on imperialism both internally and externally. Sullivan’s (1983) superb analysis also portrays that the anxiety of absence relating to England underlies both liberal ‘fathers’ above works. Overall, imperialism and the monarchy as foundations of Britishness have fuelled damaging exclusionary mindsets and beliefs regarding British national identity over the course of history. These will be further highlighted in the following sections; they are ingrained within everyday British life, from the economic system to various cultural aspects, as outlined by Sanghera (2021).

Section II: Devolution and Britishness

Moving from historical and imperial foundations, an emblematic case that can shed more light on Britishness today is devolution. As stimulated by the referendum in 1997, this refers to the transfer of power from Westminster to other countries in the United Kingdom in certain areas such as transport and education. As Vernon Bogdanor (2001) alludes, devolution and various

national unrest have been somewhat inevitable since the nineteenth century as regional differences increased. Overall, devolution has importantly highlighted that Britishness encompasses a complex range of identities and cultures, and that these should be recognised; the continuing complex elements of national subjectivities and debates around the independence and identities of the Welsh, Scottish, English and Northern Irish must be noted within discussions of Britishness. Yet the fact that England has strongly contested full Scottish independence, for example, has not only highlighted a sense of the anxiety of absence – fears that Britain will dissolve – but also again arguably portrays its underlying detrimental nature while forcing some people to be defined as British. The related case of Scotland also highlights the politics of exclusion; decisions of exclusion and inclusion are often used by Westminster at its own discretion. In many ways, devolution portrayed Britishness as a flexible, multifaceted – yet in some ways also as detrimental – phenomenon, encompassing multiple nations and perspectives.

Devolution also highlighted paradoxical elements as relating to a key phenomenon *within* Britishness that involves the Labour and the Conservative and Unionist parties. All parties have portrayed a strong sense of English exceptionalism (Richardson, 2008; Malik, 2022) – the idea that the English are in some way inherently superior. This evidently operates directly against the theoretical idea of unionism itself. This exceptionalism can arguably be seen in part via the Conservatives' coalition proposal of English Votes for English Laws (EVEL), which came into effect in 2015. MPs from devolved nations were able to vote on English legal matters in Westminster, but English MPs were not able to vote on legal matters regarding the devolved nations. EVEL was proposed in 2015 to address this. This was stimulated by the so-called English Question, also known as the West-Lothian Question, which questions the above issue that EVEL sought to address. This was a defensive attempt at, as Robert Hazell (2006:4) succinctly puts it, 'giving England a stronger political voice; and devolving power within England'. However, in some ways, EVEL encouraged the centralisation of power and dominance by Westminster that devolution sought to challenge. Although suspended in 2021, some – such as

Nicola Sturgeon from the Scottish National Party – argued that it unfairly favoured England while negatively affecting other devolved nations in areas such as spending, specifically targeting Scotland after the independence referendum (Sturgeon, 2015). Sturgeon and others also pointed out that it was difficult to determine what counted as a solely English issue (Gover and Kenny, 2015), meaning that EVEL carried a worrying opportunity for English superiority and dominance. It also highlighted the paradoxical yet continual tension between calls for unionism versus English superiority and national divisions involved within Britishness. The trend of English exceptionalism that is continually portrayed overall by Westminster, also via the generally **quasi-federal system**, again highlights some detrimental and paradoxical strands within Britishness today. Therefore, exploring devolution and related contexts, including English exceptionalism, continues to portray worrying aspects and tensions within Britishness as related to the politics of exclusion.

Interestingly, the above points support Aughey's (2010) *original* argument regarding Englishness and the anxieties of absence and silence; beliefs in English exceptionalism shown via EVEL can be seen as an attempt to ameliorate fears of the disappearance of Englishness, both politically and culturally. Pushing Aughey's (2010) work further beyond Englishness, his theory is also consistently implicit in the literature on devolution and on the 'crisis' of Britishness. The perceived 'crisis' is partially due to a range of discourses and events, including devolution, supposedly challenging Britishness or unionism (Ward, 2009; Keating, 2010). This crisis discourse has included fears of British absence and silence both internationally and domestically, and tends to be overblown (*The Economist*, 2017). However, the 'crisis' of Britishness discourse is also a further example of the perseverance of the anxiety of absence, arguably with its foundations in imperialist times. Here, overall, Aughey's (2010) work is deeply useful as an analytical tool to understand the complexity of Britishness today, especially in the context of devolution.

Section III: Brexit and Britishness

As another key political event related to uncertainty and polarisation in Britain, Brexit has highlighted major political strands and elements of Britishness today. It has also again portrayed how Britishness is often based on – and used to enforce – the politics of exclusion. This is further supported by application of the anxieties outlined by Aughey (2010), particularly the anxieties of absence and imitation as both relate to the fear of losing British identity within the European Union. This was powerfully implied by Dr El-Enany (2017: no pagination): ‘The terms on which the EU referendum debate took place are symptomatic of a Britain struggling to conceive of its place in the world post-Empire.’ As seen earlier, and due to its inherent foundations regarding the politics of exclusion, Britishness has often been defined by what it is *not*. There has been a detrimental form of othering historically, which has continued and can clearly be seen during and after the 2016 Brexit referendum.

Domestically, this was largely seen via the type of discourse used surrounding the referendum, which Rick Bowler (2017) argued by showing how the theory of numbers – which refers to the use of numbers and statistics to evoke an emotional response – was utilised in political discourse to define those who supposedly did not belong in campaigns for the ‘leave’ vote. Bowler (2017) persuasively argues that this is partially how British racism is predominantly displayed within the political sphere regarding Brexit – the United Nations has also pointed to the fact that British politicians have been to blame for the rise in racial and religiously based hate crime after Brexit (Butler, 2016). This can be seen via the – ongoing – behaviour of multiple key political figures such as Nigel Farage (Butler, 2016). Britishness today is thus often also underpinned by a consequent implication of whiteness, at the very least implied by some of the political elites and key figures involved in the EU referendum. Whiteness is often built upon a degree of comfort that many are reluctant to acknowledge, as highlighted by Robin DiAngelo’s (2018) arguments regarding the notion of white fragility. This again highlights how perceived elements of Britishness, such as whiteness, are naively clung to by some individuals in the face of the anxiety of absence.

To further explain the element of othering involved, Aughey's (2010) work must again be applied. As seen by Dr El-Enany's (2017) quote above, the Brexit referendum caused a widespread, massive sense of uncertainty. The classically British principle of parliamentary sovereignty and the proud welfare pillar of the NHS were utilised in the face of the fear of the unknown and potential loss of a strong British identity. This can be seen via previous Prime Minister Theresa May's attempts to unite Britain in the face of polarisation, as hinted at by the work of Judi Atkins (2021). However, Atkins has argued that May's attempts to unite Britain were primarily directed at leave voters while excluding remainers, thus also portraying elements and boundaries of exclusion of Britishness within Britain. Furthermore, the split vote also arguably portrayed the fragility of Britishness, which is a common trope echoed or at least implied in some of the literature on Britishness, and sometimes utilised within the 'crisis of Britishness' rhetoric, as portrayed by Alex Niven (2021) for instance. Therefore, Brexit has highlighted again how Britishness can be utilised by both individuals and nations on the basis of otherness and exclusion, often in the face of fear or anxiety. However, this paper rejects that this foundation is a new evolution of Britishness, as seen via previous points, as this has existed since imperial times.

Brexit highlighted further the deeply multifaceted nature of Britishness, which has again conveyed the paradoxical, complex nature of Britishness itself. Brexit stimulated many different discussions on nationality, and thus identity, while also highlighting and questioning the rights of British and non-British nationals overseas (Benson *et al.*, 2022; Wright, 2020). Brexit highlighted definitions of Britishness as being both bound by nationality and bound by subjectivity; data has shown that subjective feelings of Europeanness compared to Britishness have been declining since 2007, despite 48 per cent voting to remain European (Batel and Devine-Wright, 2018). The vote result itself highlighted how divided the British public was; as Sales (2012) argues, tensions between 'Remainers' and 'Leavers' lie within the concept of the nation-state, and are based on the feeling of belonging. As also seen in the previous section, Britishness encompasses a variety of identities, of which

Sales (2012) argues a main conflict that the Britishness agenda has highlighted is between being Muslim and being British. As also hinted at by Sales (2012), the agenda of Britishness changes with each major political change, and events such as 9/11 and Brexit have placed this unnecessary contention on the agenda. The agenda of, and therefore epistemologies of, Britishness therefore consistently evolves due to its subjective, identity-based aspects, which somewhat clashes with its exclusionary foundations.

Furthermore, as Ward (2004:4) interestingly states, ‘the frequent intermingling of different people from within and without the United Kingdom has also enforced a necessity for multiple identities’. Diversity and multiculturalism are inherent aspects of Britishness both historically and currently, yet they are often wrongly posed as antithetical to Britishness and as a threat, as also partially seen in the previous section. Multiculturalism as a term and policy approach became more popular post-1945, when after World War II, Britain invited citizens from previous colonies, including the Windrush generation, to help rebuild the economy. Britishness inherently contains aspects of movement and diversity, the former of which is especially overlooked. Britishness, and how one defines it, can be based on individuals’ path of, or lack of, migration and the history behind that. Yet definitions of Britishness cannot be entirely objectively defined or controlled, despite the English state’s shameful actions while operating within a hostile environment, as seen in part via the Windrush scandal, considering its evident links to subjective identity, complicated notions of belonging and its roots in imperial history. Overall, fundamentally Brexit portrayed again how Britishness today is consistently used to enhance the politics of exclusion, enforcing a mindset that causes harm to those who are deemed as not ‘belonging’ or not British.

These complex aspects of subjectivity in this case lead to Aughey’s (2010) work. His analysis of anxieties is again deeply useful to analyse Brexit and Britishness, specifically regarding the anxiety of absence. This can be applied in two key ways: some feared the end of the United Kingdom’s involvement in the European Union, while others feared the continued involvement in it. Brexit therefore built upon epistemologies of what it meant to be British;

Bowler (2017) argued that Brexit was symbolic of a racist Britain, portraying a fear of multiculturalism and intense xenophobia stimulated by ethnic, racial and citizenship-related supposed boundaries. Consequently, a survey by Michaela Benson *et al.* (2022) found that some feel embarrassed to be British, with the co-lead researcher Benson stating, 'it [Brexit] has brought deep transformations to the lives of British citizens in the EU and EEA' (quoted in Henley, 2022: no pagination). This is again reflective of differing personal epistemologies regarding Britishness, which is another factor in its complexity. Moreover, the survey also found that others were angered by their lack of free movement (Benson *et al.*, 2022), again pointing to the facet of migration within Britishness.

In relation to Aughey's (2010) work, Brexit has also further encouraged a fear of absence; McDermid *et al.* (2021) has stated that Scottish people were strongly advised to reject independence in order to remain in the EU. In hindsight, it could therefore be suggested that the result of the Brexit referendum has been a further stimulant for Scottish independence and thus a rejection of the imitation of England, although admittedly there is mixed evidence to suggest this (Curtice, 2021). As also hinted in the above section, unionism and fears of its erosion is therefore also a deeply vital point to explore regarding Britishness. Aughey's (2010) work on the anxiety of anticipation, and thus the break-up of unionism, can also help analyse the potential future of Britishness. For instance, it could be asked how the anxiety of anticipation of the union breaking up directs voting behaviours and influences attitudes towards Britishness. Overall, Brexit and related factors again undeniably convey that Britishness today contains various levels of subjectivity while largely being based on and enforcing the politics of exclusion.

Conclusion

Overall, this paper has sought to highlight what Britishness means today. In order to do this, this paper has also applied the deeply influential work of Aughey (2010) to Britishness, which was specifically to relate to his theoretical

analysis of the four different types of anxieties to analyse Englishness. This paper has sought to encourage further application of Aughey's (2010) work to Britishness, as it provides an invaluable lens to support more nuanced and developed understandings of Britishness.

To conclude, Britishness has a deeply paradoxical and complex nature. This paper has highlighted this by exploring various historical and political events and periods – imperialism, devolution and Brexit – to focus analysis. Within this, this paper has highlighted the ways that Britishness is often used as a tool that is derived from and enforces the politics of exclusion. Importantly, part of its complex nature is the fact that there is a subjective element, which also makes it difficult to state that Britishness is wholly negative precisely because it is subjective. Ultimately, especially considering the current political climate in the UK and internationally, this paper has sought to highlight and challenge the damaging use of 'Britishness' as a political tool that underlies much of the recent and current political discourse in the United Kingdom.

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Glossary

Unionism: This relates to the theory that the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland should remain unified.

Devolution: The sharing or transfer of power or certain powers to 'lower' levels of government or to other governmental bodies. In the UK, this often

refers to Westminster sharing some powers with both local government and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This therefore challenges centralisation, where power is concentrated in one area.

Quasi-federal: The UK is often referred to as having quasi-federal status due to devolution. A federalism refers to a system of government whereby power is devolved. Due to the almost unitary status of Westminster or parliamentary sovereignty (essentially the idea that Parliament is supreme over other bodies) combined with devolution, the UK is therefore quasi-federal as it has both aspects.

The English Question: Also known as the West-Lothian Question, this refers to whether Members of Parliament from other parts of the UK should be able to vote on matters that only concern England.

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