Securing disunion: Young people's nationalism, identities and (in) securities in the campaign for an independent Scotland

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores ethnic and religious minority youth perspectives of security and nationalism in Scotland during the independence campaign in 2014. We discuss how young people co-construct narratives of Scottish nationalism alongside minority ethnic and faith identities in order to feel secure. By critically combining literature from feminist geopolitics, international relations (IR) and children's emotional geographies, we employ the concept of 'ontological security'. The paper departs from state-centric approaches to security to explore the relational entanglements between geopolitical discourses and the ontological security of young people living through a moment of political change. We examine how everyday encounters with difference can reflect broader geopolitical narratives of security and insecurity, which subsequently trouble notions of 'multicultural nationalism' in Scotland and demonstrate ways that youth 'securitize the self' (Kinnvall, 2004). The paper responds to calls for empirical analyses of youth perspectives on nationalism and security (Benwell, 2016) and on the nexus between security and emotional subjectivity in critical geopolitics (Pain, 2009; Shaw, Powell, & De La Ossa, 2014). Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), this paper draws on focus group and interview data from 382 ethnic and religious minority young people in Scotland collected over the 12-month period of the campaign.

1. Introduction

This paper discusses young people's everyday encounters with politics using the referendum campaign for independence in Scotland in 2014 as an illustrative case.[1] We consider the ways in which the campaign for Scottish independence represented hopeful multicultural and democratic aspirations for young people. Throughout the referendum campaign, Scotland was framed, by both Yes and No campaigns, as a transitional state and a site of emancipatory politics that emphasised 'securing futures' for the

(young) people of Scotland. The inclusion of youth voices on both sides of the campaign shows efforts made to strengthen youth political participation and recognize youth political agency (BBC News, 2014a; 2014b). This context is unique due to the nature of Scottish nationalism, its civic and 'multicultural' character and the paradox of being at once inclusive and exclusive. We argue that the discourse of inclusive multicultural nationalism in Scotland is effective in making some young people 'feel' secure in the nation state in spite of its ambitions for discontinuity from the Union. However, the everyday violence of racism in Scotland undermines efforts towards inclusion and multiculturalism, generating ontological insecurity in young people's everyday lives.

A key aim of the paper is to contribute empirically grounded research that offers youth focused directions in security theorizing. Following feminist political geographers, we position security as psycho-social, focusing on the individual narratives of young people and their sense of ontological security in the context of national political change. In doing so, we draw attention to *lived* (in)securities and everyday practices of securitization. Such practices are

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  [1] We use the term politics here to mean both the formal politics around voting, engagements with political parties and nationalism, as well as an everyday, lived politics that consists of multi-scalar discourses and practices. We draw here on a feminist reading of geopolitics as embodied, emotional and intimate.

situated, located and embodied, hence we seek to re-scale security and put young people's narratives at the centre. We argue that young people's agency is central — not only to understanding multi-scalar impacts of security but to theorizing security itself.

We begin by reviewing three key areas of scholarship in order to bridge theory on security; Critical Security Studies that have traditionally been limited to scholars of IR, feminist geopolitics, and children's emotional geographies. This discussion is followed by an outline of the methodology used to research young people's everyday geopolitics in Scotland. Finally, we present a thematic analysis of this research with young people, examining the way in which young people co-construct narratives of multicultural nationalism in Scotland to form a personal sense of security within the nation state. Following this, we explore how such rhetorical frameworks are undermined through everyday encounters of racism that generate discursive and embodied insecurity. Self-surveillance and self-silencing practices function to 'securitize the self' in response to the threat of ontological insecurity.

2. Re-thinking critical securities

While 'security' has always been a contested concept (Gallie, 1956), the post-9/11 landscape has altered the nature and impact of international security work (scholarship, policy, discourse) leading to 'a much more expansive, fluid and uncertain concept' (Mutimer, Grayson, & Beier, 2013, p. 7). Scholarship on the securitization of everyday life has re-scaled geopolitics to the everyday level whereby matters of security are lived and experienced in non-exceptional landscapes (Dalby, 2010; Pain, Panelli, Kindon, & Little, 2010). Within these landscapes, certain subjects are more likely to be secured against and framed as a threat to ordinary life (Ahmed; 2004; Katz, 2010). Hussein and Bagguley (2012) argue that Muslims are 'securitized citizens', constructed through counter-terrorism policies as a 'security threat' and justified through common sense suspicion. As such, changes in the everyday practices of Muslims have been observed, such as the 'self-policing of personal mobility' due to experiences of 'publically enacted forms of Islamophobia' (Hussein & Bagguley, 2012: 730). Others have observed self-surveillance/self-silencing practices by Muslims in response to security discourses across different sites and scales, such the University campus (Hopkins, 2010; Nabi, 2010), places of worship (Jones, 2010), and through conciliatory expressions of belonging or 'mainstream' discursive practices (Mansson McGinty, 2013).

Traditional (realist and neoliberal) conceptions of security have largely held a state-centric view that presuppose nation states as rational actors whose primary concern is to protect and defend the stability and values of the state (see Bourne, 2014 for review). Critical security theorists have broadened and deepened the field advocating 'alternative securities' and multi-level analysis of individuals, communities and societies as intersubjective relations (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998; Enloe, 1990; Neocleous, 2008; Shepherd, 2013; Wibben, 2011). Bourne (2014:2) argues that security is a relational concept — it is defined in context, in relation to an object that is being secured and as such 'there is no one 'security' but multiple securities'. This reflects a broader trend in critical geopolitics to a focus on the everyday (Dittmer & Gray, 2010; Thrift, 2000), beyond-the-state networks, flows and identities. Feminist geographers recognize the emotional, embodied and intimate aspects of security (Cowen & Story, 2013; Katz, 2004; Pain, 2009; Pain & Staeheli, 2014). They emphasise the partiality of knowledge production and challenge masculinist or westernized narratives by acknowledging marginalized voices (Dowler & Sharp, 2001; Hunt & Rygiel, 2006; Hyndman, 2004). This is a powerful critique that animates the 'subaltern' (Sharp, 2013), promotes an 'anti- ', 'alter-'or 'counter-'geopolitics (Koopman, 2011; Routledge, 2006; Secor,

2001) with a focus on *doing* (peaceful) geopolitics. Hyndman (2001:219) promotes 'a finer scale of 'security' accountable to people, as individuals and groups, and analyses the spaces of violence that traverse public/private distinctions'. Similarly, Pain et al. (2010: 973) argue that 'research on securitization has provided a potential route through which to connect these global issues and everyday voices more firmly'. Feminist scholars reveal the neglected sites and scales of security. What is perceived to be ordinary is unlocked from the 'constitutive binaries of modernity' (public/private, global/local, inside/outside, normal/exceptional) and re-located at the scale of the intimate and everyday (Cowen & Story, 2013; see also; Cowen & Gilbert, 2008; Enloe, 1990; Puar, 2007). Pain and Smith (2008) see the everyday and the geopolitical as existing in a symbiosis, albeit subject to breaks, conflicts and tensions that are both awkward and enabling with the potential to be transformative (Pain, 2009; cf.; Askins, 2008).

2.1. Young people's securities

A further development that has emerged from interactions between political geography, security studies and children's geographies is a call for greater attention to the child-body-politic as a realm of investigation (Beier, 2015; Benwell (2016); Brocklehurst, 2015; Kraftl, Horton, & Tucker, 2012; Philo & Smith, 2013). In studies of security, age is a 'neglected dimension' (Bourne, 2014, p. 63) and 'adultist' approaches downplay the experiences of large swathes of the population who are affected by and shape global politics (Katz, 2004; Philo & Smith, 2013). Brocklehurst (2015:38) notes that despite calls to widen the gaze of international relations to 'those most in need (Stephens, 1995)', children's security 'remains unrealized and their relevance too is relatively under theorized'. She cautions that the danger of such an absence in theorizing security is also 'a symptom of the security we create' (ibid: 42). The representation of children and young people in the geopolitical scripting of international war and diplomacy denotes both their 'absence and presence' (Brocklehurst, 2015, p. 32). Anderson and Moller (2013) suggest a 'discursive-representational security regime' that operates through photojournalism has potential to consolidate particular ways of seeing children in relation to war and security, despite its critical intentions. Such representations are disempowering. Children are constructed as the victims of war, as child soldiers (Lee-Koo, 2011), and as 'agents' of change in community-based peace building yet still spoken 'on behalf of' (Brocklehurst, 2015, p. 33). In this sense, children and young people are misrecognized as apolitical yet used as representational bodies to justify and legitimise security discourse and intervention.

In this paper, we view young people as political actors through the lens of everyday geopolitics, re-connecting the political with the personal. The framing of children and young people as either apolitical or politically radicalized or 'deviant' (Berents, 2015) promotes a discourse of protection and prevention, materialized through anti-radicalization policies in the case of young Muslims in particular. As Beier (2015:9) notes "… children are once again reduced to an objectified political problem rather than being recognizable as genuine and autonomous political actors". In her work on young people's responses to the war in Iraq, Horschelmann (2008: 587) calls for greater recognition of young people as political agents who are engaged in the 'making, negotiation and contestation of global politics'. Drawing on research with anti-war protestors in Leipzig she argues that young people engage with the geopolitical in everyday sites and spaces. These include the home, where conversations with family and media exposure to politics occurs, and the city where young people negotiate 'site(s) of protest and collective memory' in the context of geopolitical legacies of post-socialism (Horschelmann, 2008, p. 601 and 598). In a different