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Chapter 6:

‘Leave a Light on for Scotland’; Examining Cosmopolitan Nationalism in Scotland

Marcus Nicolson - Soc Movements Chapter

Abstract:

In this chapter I examine the relationship between Scottish nationalism and Europeanness. In particular, I investigate pro-European rhetoric as used by the Scottish National Party (SNP) in public discourse. I then contrast the message of this discourse with survey evidence which shows that the Scottish public retain attitudes to outsiders that are not sharply different from those of other UK nations, including England. Scottish nationalism is often referred to as a politics which is civic, pro-European, and progressive in nature (Davidson et al. 2018). However, through this Scottish case study it is revealed that Scottish pro-Europeanness and other commonly-accepted traits of Scottishness have been contested in public debate over the last decades. Today Scottish nationalism, and support for the European Union, remains more nuanced than many outside observers may conclude. This conclusion is based on three main findings from the case study. The first point of note is that a hyperactive politicised Europeanness in macro-level politics has only marginal everyday reflection for the wider Scottish public, once we depart from the familiar measure of attitudes to the EU as being synonymous with openness to outsiders. The second is that Europeanness and nationalist identity are not inconsistent, and part of the explanation for Scotland’s anti-Brexit stance is that it reflects the energies of the independence campaign. Lastly, Scotland’s mainstream political framing of immigration has been employed to justify Scottish distinctiveness, and garner support for an independent Scotland in Europe. This case study exposes the clear links between Scottish nationalism and pro-European politics, highlighting that the two are not oppositional forces.

6.1 Introduction and Context

The country case of Scotland provides a unique point of analysis in the context of this edited volume which examines the wider European project crisis and issues of European integration. In a comparative European lens, Scotland is a small nation, with a population of just under 5.5 million people, which has witnessed two lifetime-defining political referenda in the last 6-
years. 2014 saw a national referendum on Scottish independence from the United Kingdom, which returned a majority “No” vote. Two years later the Brexit referendum on UK membership of the European Union resulted in a majority ”Leave” vote for the UK. The outcome of the Brexit vote came as an unexpected result for the wider Scottish electorate, who had in their majority (62%) elected to “Remain” in the European Union. There was a distinct conflict between the result returned from the Scottish public and those of the wider United Kingdom, who expressed a desire to leave the EU. Support for Scottish independence, and the governing Scottish National Party (SNP), has increased in the years since the Brexit vote for a variety of reasons that I will explain in detail throughout this chapter. In the years following the vote, macro-level pro-independence political discourse in Scotland has often been framed around the country’s pro-European attitude and outward-looking international ambitions.

In this chapter I examine the relationship between Scottish nationalism and Europeanness. In particular, I investigate pro-European rhetoric as used by the Scottish National Party (SNP) in public discourse. I then contrast the message of this discourse with survey evidence which shows that the Scottish public retain attitudes to outsiders that are not sharply different from those of other UK nations, including England. Scottish nationalism is often referred to as a politics which is civic, pro-European, and progressive in nature (Davidson et al. 2018). However, through this Scottish case study it is revealed that Scottish pro-Europeanness and other commonly accepted traits of Scottishness have been contested in public debate over the last decades. Today Scottish nationalism, and support for the European Union, remains more nuanced than many outside observers may conclude.

This conclusion is based on three main findings from the case study. The first point to note is that a hyperactive politicised Europeanness in macro-level politics has only marginal everyday reflection for the wider Scottish public, once we depart from the familiar measure of attitudes to the EU as being synonymous with openness to outsiders. The second is that Europeanness
and nationalist identity are not inconsistent, and part of the explanation for Scotland’s anti-Brexit stance is that it reflects the energies of the independence campaign. Lastly, Scotland’s mainstream political framing of immigration has been employed to justify Scottish distinctiveness, and garner support for an independent Scotland in Europe. This case study exposes the clear links between Scottish nationalism and pro-European politics, highlighting that the two are not oppositional forces. It is important, also, to consider some of the key emerging themes from the literature in order to delve deeper into the themes of cosmopolitanism and nationalism, before studying specific examples from the Scottish context in detail. There is a complex relationship between the two-terms, as outlined in the following section.

6.2 Literature Review

Tom Nairn pioneered the notion of neo-nationalism (1977) in his seminal book The Break-Up of Britain, published in the late 1970s. Neo-nationalism, as Nairn defines it, is a politics which is a reaction to increasing transnational trading and a rise in multinational corporations in the globalised world, including the wider European project. Following Nairn’s conceptualisation, neo-nationalism is not defined by a retreat from globalisation, as more traditional forms of nationalist politics may be categorised, but is rather a product and catalyst of it. Scottish nationalism, in pursuing its independence in Europe objective, is exemplar of neo-nationalist political thought, with arguments about increased trade and international cooperation forming a critical part of rhetoric in the country. The neo-nationalist perspective has incorporated aspects of a cosmopolitan brand of nationalism which has evolved as states have come to recognise the importance of transnational mechanisms to their chances of economic prosperity.
Calhoun (2003) has stated that ‘cosmopolitanism is neither a freedom from culture nor a matter of pure individual choice, but a cultural position constructed on particular social bases and a choice made possible by that culture and those bases. It should be noted that there is an important distinction between the two terms, cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitanisation. Beck and Levy (2013, 6) have specified that “cosmopolitanisation is the mechanism through which nationhood is reimagined.” Furthermore, Beck and Levy (2013, 6) suggest that “cosmopolitan nations are reimagined through the anticipation of endangered futures.” In the risk society states must adapt to the pressures of contemporary neoliberal competition and develop a cosmopolitan vision of nationhood. In the Scottish example, we will see that pro-European attitudes have been perpetuated in public discourse since the 1980s to further Scottish cosmopolitan nationalism.

Billig (1995) has drawn attention to the everyday, banal, features of nationalism whereby nationalist sentiments are demonstrated unconsciously in routine and daily social interactions. Examples can vary widely from national topics of conversation to more self-evident nationalist political behaviour such as flag-waving. In Scotland, comparisons with England form part of the banal nationalist rhetoric. Beck (2002, 28), building on Billig’s theory, believes that we have now entered an era of banal cosmopolitanism “…in which everyday nationalism is circumvented and undermined and we experience ourselves integrated into global processes and phenomena.” What does this all mean for the case of Scottish nationalism? While we see examples of banal cosmopolitan nationalism in the discourse and policies of the Scottish government and other elite political actors in the country, these sentiments must be mobilised among the general population if the country is to succeed in gaining independence. The nationalist movement in Scotland must, therefore, go beyond banal cosmopolitanism to reach its aims.
The purpose of this case study is not to investigate the core social movement of Scottish nationalism itself. Instead, I focus on how discourse surrounding Scotland’s place in Europe has been used to mobilise, what may be termed as, banal cosmopolitan nationalism in the country, where there has been a gap in the existing resource. Keating (2009, 130) has highlighted that “the SNP's vision of Europe has never been very clear...as the European Union develops and deepens, it could gradually replace the United Kingdom as the predominant union and external support system for Scottish self-government.” A pro-European stance, however, is not a long-standing preposition in Scottish politics. Rather, political attitudes have evolved considerably since a period of Euroscepticism which surrounded the political debate in the 1970s.

The Scottish National Party (SNP) has been the dominant party in Scottish politics for over a decade. It has been the governing party in the devolved Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh since 2007, supported by the Scottish Greens. In the UK’s Westminster Parliament, the party holds 48 out of the 59 Scottish constituency seats. The SNP received the largest percentage of votes with 45% at the 2019 general election (Harvey, 2020). The civic brand of nationalism which the Scottish National Party (SNP) have championed has been described as a nationalism which prioritises place, not race (Moskal, 2015). In other words, Scotland’s brand of civic nationalism adopts an ideology that a Scottish national identity is available to anyone moving to the country, regardless of ethnic background. This was encapsulated in the First Minister’s comments at a speech in Brussels in 2019:

We can be Scottish and Polish – or Italian, or Pakistani, and much else besides – and European... belief in Scottish independence – ...(is) about self-government, not ethnicity – goes hand in hand with a belief in internationalism and interdependence. National identity is not, and never should be, an exclusive concept. (First Minister Speech at European Policy Centre, Brussels, 11th June 2019)
Scottish nationalism, particularly as advocated through the policies and discourse of the SNP, has tried to emphasise Scotland’s “diverse and progressive” qualities in order to establish itself as an inclusive and civic brand of nationalism (Leith and Soule, 2011). Scotland is personified in this political discourse as a “small, proud, welcoming, open and tolerant country”, which has furthered civic nationalist sentiment (Bechhofer and Mccrone, 2009). These qualities have been described as making Scotland distinctive from other parts of the UK. However, despite this political rhetoric, non-civic and exclusive criteria, including birthplace and ancestry, continue to determine public perceptions of national belonging and Scottishness (Leith and Soule 2011; McCollum, Nowok, and Tindal 2014). Therefore, macro-level political civic nationalist attitudes to citizenship are not always replicated at a population level and Scottish claims of tolerance are often exaggerated in reporting. A pro-European stance has also been adopted in the rhetoric of the SNP to build support for Scottish independence.

6.3 Pro-European Political Sentiment in Scottish Political and Public Debates

Scotland’s desire to remain within the European Union has been used by the SNP as one of the founding arguments to further the case for Scottish independence and foster division with the UK Government in recent years. The “independence in Europe” objective has formed a key role in the cosmopolitan nationalism the SNP has advocated since the late 1980s. However, it is important to consider that the SNP was not always a pro-European political party. Until as recently as 1988 the party was highly Eurosceptic (Brown et al. 1998). Dardanelli (2005) has claimed that in 1979 SNP voters were more Eurosceptic than voters of other political parties in Scotland and perceived the European project as a right-wing and capitalist mechanism. Until 1988, the SNP party leadership were against membership in the European Economic
Community (EEC) due to the perception that “…the EC suffered from ‘euro-sclerosis’ and inefficiency” (van der Zwet 2015, 168). The Scottish electorate believed that the EEC was a neo-liberal instrument which would not be of benefit to the wider population. However, when Eurosceptic sentiments began to develop within the Conservative party, the SNP preformed a U-turn on its Eurosceptic policy and began to campaign for its new goal of achieving an independent Scotland in Europe (Ichijo, 2004). Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon recently made an appeal to European Union leaders to “Leave a Light on for Scotland” (Sturgeon, 2020) in the hope that an independent Scotland will re-join the EU as an independent nation in the future.

A pro-European political stance has dominated public debate in Scotland in the years since the Brexit referendum in 2016. In the SNP’s Tale of Two Cities campaign (SNP, 2019) promotional video the narrator juxtaposes Edinburgh, home of the Scottish parliament, with London and the Conservative Party-led UK government. Edinburgh is presented as progressive and outward-looking, while London is seen to be stagnating and holding Scotland back from economic opportunity by insisting on a Brexit deal that will negatively impact upon Scotland. Again, the claim is made that “Scotland is being ripped out of Europe against its will” by what is described as an unsympathetic and uncaring “Tory government”. By pursuing with the UK’s departure from the European Union despite the vote returned in Scotland, the narrator claims that; “…this Tory government has ignored the people of Scotland and ignored the Scottish parliament” (SNP, 2019). Following the message of the video, Scottish voters should therefore vote SNP to ensure a prosperous future and future membership of the European Union. It would appear that such arguments gained traction within Scottish voters as the 2019 UK general election returned an impressive win for the SNP. Such messages were also repeated in SNP campaign material in advance of the EU parliamentary elections in 2019.
In the lead-up to the European Parliament elections in 2019 Paisley and Renfrewshire South MP Mhairi Black made the claim that Scotland “…won’t abandon our European neighbours” and urged voters to “…vote SNP and keep Scotland at the very heart of Europe” (SNP, 2019). The message of this video is to vote against the pro-Brexit Conservative Party-led UK government and reaffirm Scotland’s pro-Europe stance in the political arena. Elsewhere, publicity campaign group Scotland is Now have used Twitter to offer self-proclaimed “love letters to Europe”. In a poem recited in one campaign video the narrator states, “…as long as Scotland’s still here, Europe you are always welcome” (Scotland is Now, 2019). The video blends together poetry with scenes and imagery of Scottish nature, which presents an image of a Scottish cultural identity that is closely linked to a unique sense of geography. The video provides evidence of how pro-European narratives are shared across wider cultural platforms in Scotland, and not limited to what may be thought of as traditional political arenas. The examples are also evidence of the banal cosmopolitan nationalism (Beck, 2002) which can be identified in Scotland.

However, pro-European arguments presented in Scottish public debate are often lacking in definition and substance. Salamone (2020) claims that the media have played a role in limiting debate on the mechanisms and functioning of the EU. For example, there was little discussion in the Scottish media of the €750-billion coronavirus recovery plan, one of the most significant achievements of the EU in recent years. Salamone (2020) thus observes that “while European themes certainly form part of the public discourse [in Scotland], they do not feature to an extent or depth that might be expected, given Scotland’s ostensible pro-EU position”. Critics have emphasised, therefore, that public discourse around Scotland’s place in Europe is often presented in simplified terms, which has at times even overlooked significant achievements of the EU to which Scotland could benefit. This streamlined discourse around Europe has fed into the banal cosmopolitan nationalism that has been promoted by the SNP, and other political
actors in Scotland. Easy-to-understand and clear messages form a key part of this, which may offer a part-explanation for why the SNP chose the slogan “Stop Brexit” in their campaign for the 2019 general election. However, banal cosmopolitan nationalist discourse in Scotland also goes beyond general arguments for EU membership and looks to specific areas, such as immigration, to justify Scotland’s differing political attitudes.

6.4 Pro-immigration Discourse and Scottish Civic Nationalism

In the following section I examine Scottish government discourse and policy on migration where arguments are primarily formed around economic, humanitarian and cosmopolitan justifications. These justifications are often intertwined in a manner that feed together to further banal cosmopolitan nationalist attitudes in Scotland. Hepburn and Rosie (2017, 242) have highlighted that “elite discourse […] presents immigrants as key players in an open, inclusive and multicultural Scottish nation”. In the wake of the Brexit vote political discourse in Scotland has continued to focus on the economic benefits of EU migrants, and the role they play in maintaining vital public services within what is described as an ageing economy. The following extract provides a clear example of this rhetoric. In January 2020 Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon addressed EU migrants at the launch event for a planned new Scottish visa where she highlighted the important role that EU migrant workers, whom she refers to as “New Scots”, play in the Scottish economy.

…the fact that Scotland is now a place people come to, rather than leave, is one of the best things to have happened during my time as an MSP. These new Scots have made Scotland’s population younger – something which is important to the sustainability of public services. (Plan for Scottish visa: First Minister's speech 27th January 2020)
In the above example, we can see that pro-immigration discourse in Scotland is often grounded in terms of the economic contribution that migrants bring. Sturgeon presents Scotland as a destination country for migrants, including EU citizens, who have contributed to making the country’s population younger. The Scottish Government have repeatedly claimed that the continued arrival of EU migrants to work in the country are essential if Scotland is to maintain its public services. More recently, however, the SNP, as represented by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, have included humanitarian arguments for a pro-immigration stance. These have served to politically position Scotland in contrast to the firmer migration policy of the UK government in the Westminster parliament, London. The following example shows how such economic and humanitarian arguments are intertwined in Scottish political rhetoric:

In Scotland, we know, we understand that the Westminster approach to migration - as well as being deeply inhumane - poses an existential threat to our future prosperity. (Brexit and Scotland's future: First Minister Nicola Sturgeon’s statement April 24th 2019)

In her statement Sturgeon suggests that the UK government possess an inhumane immigration policy which threatens the future of Scotland’s economy. The excerpt illustrates how the UK government are positioned as a threat to Scotland’s economic prosperity in the SNP’s discourse, albeit largely on economic grounds. The interaction between economic, humanitarian, and cosmopolitan justifications for migration appears to compliment the SNP’s message that Scotland is a country which welcomes diversity and is thus more outward-looking than the other Leave-voting nations in the UK. Similar sentiments are to be found in examples taken from Scottish public policy.

Pro-immigration policy and discourse has also formed a key part of the SNP’s vision for an independent Scotland. The Scottish Government’s “New Scots 2018-2022” framework has been developed with the objective of improving integration processes for asylum seeker and refugee arrivals in the country (Scottish Government, 2018). Further public
campaigns, including Fresh Talent and One Scotland, Many Cultures, have sought to promote Scotland’s diversity and share a discourse of tolerance and acceptance towards migrant groups, including EU. These campaigns have also had the objective of highlighting Scotland as a destination country for migrants (Hepburn and Rosie, 2017). However, the SNP government has also been criticised for their consistent reference to the economic contribution of migrants, and overlooking other benefits of immigration, including the cultural and linguistic diversity which newcomer groups bring to the country (Phipps and Fassetta, 2015). Regardless of these criticisms, Scotland has continued to brand itself as a tolerant nation in macro-political discourse, particularly through the SNP.

In contrast to the Scottish Government’s pro-immigration political stance, the Scottish public do not appear to share the same welcoming attitudes to migrant groups. A recent YouGov opinion poll found that a large percentage of the Scottish general population believed immigrants, particularly non-Europeans, have a negative impact on the economy (YouGov, 2019). Very similar results were gathered from an English sample group of survey respondents in London. As London is a highly cosmopolitan city with a great number of migrants, it is perhaps less surprising that such levels of anti-migrant feeling were recorded. However, it is particularly alarming that the Scottish sample group reported similar levels of anti-migrant attitudes among both data sets, given the relatively low number of migrants in the country. This again serves to evidence the point that the Scottish and English public’s do not have widely differing views on immigration, despite political rhetoric to the contrary.

In a detailed analysis of the Brexit referendum, Sobolewska and Ford (2020, 281) have found that “negative views of migrants and minorities were (and are) roughly as widely held in Scotland as in England and Wales, but they were ignored by the SNP, who directed ethnocentric voters’ resentments towards London and the Tories” (2020: 281). Also, in
Glasgow, Clark (2020) has reported that discrimination against Scotland’s largest Roma minority migrant groups (of EU membership country origin) in the Govanhill area has increased in recent years. These developments also illustrate that there is a “disjunction between pro-migration rhetoric and anti-immigration sentiments at population level” in Scotland (Sime 2020, 337). These examples highlight that despite pro-immigration political rhetoric in Scotland, the wider population are not as tolerant and accepting of immigrants as political leaders would have us believe. The Brexit referendum has also been used as a point on which to frame Scottish distinctiveness to other UK nations.

6.5 Re-Imagining the Scottish Nation State

In public speeches referring to Scotland’s position on Brexit, the First Minister has emphasised that the only hope for a prosperous economic future for Scotland is to re-join the European Union as an independent nation state. These arguments have developed considerably since the aforementioned Euroscepticism which characterised the SNP, and Scottish voters, in the 1970s. This position is contrasted with the UK government who are described as pursuing a policy of isolationism. In the following speech extracts the First Minister outlines her vision for an independent Scotland:

… for the Scottish Government, independence is not about the isolationism that characterises Brexit – instead independence would see us recognizing and embracing our interdependence with other nations. We will always seek to be close allies and partners with our neighbours in Europe. The last two years, to my mind, have underlined the importance of that position. (First Minster's speech at French National Assembly 19th February 2019)

The idea of Scottish independence has never been about separatism. It is instead about the right of people to decide the form of government best suited to their needs. That right has never been more important given the threat Brexit poses to the internationalist, welcoming European ethos held by so many people in Scotland. (Nicola Sturgeon 2nd January 2021)
Scotland, in adopting an anti-Brexit political stance is therefore presented as outward-looking and reliant on the continued support and cooperation of other European nations. The above examples also emphasise how Scottish nationalism is presented as cosmopolitan and pro-European in political rhetoric. As Knight (2017, 240) has stated, “…the emergent cosmopolitanism in Scotland appears to be fused with a nationalist agenda”. Furthermore, Knight (2017, 240) contends that the First Minister’s speeches “…carry wide appeal and speak for everyday Scots who oppose the political domination of the Conservative English upper classes…”. The examples shown demonstrate that the SNP seek to reject this perceived English political domination through a continued support for the European Union which is contrasted with the Eurosceptic views of the Westminster administration. The very construction of Scottish national identity ascriptions also offers an explanation for why the Scottish public may seek to establish a pro-European political stance.

Scottish Identity Constructions

One of the most commonly used justifications for claims of being Scottish is a rejection of being English. The vis-à-vis relationship with England becomes has formed an integral part of Scottish national identity ascriptions. McCrone and Becchofer (2015) questioned members of the public on the reasons why they chose to ascribe, or not, to a Scottish identity; identity justifications from the public almost always began with the clause; “I’m Scottish because I’m not English”. The link between Scottish national identity constructions and pro-European attitudes can therefore follow a clear trajectory. As Ichijo (2004, 143) neatly summarises, “If being Scottish means not being English, and being English means being Euro-sceptical, being less Euro-sceptical is one way of asserting one’s Scottishness.”
This is not to suggest that Anglophobia is a pre-requisite of support for Scottish nationalism. Rather, an assertion of anti-Westminster politics has been adopted by the SNP to assert Scottish distinctiveness and, what have been termed, egalitarian values (Davidson et al. 2018). Traditional signifiers of Scottishness, including the wearing of tartan clothing and adoption of a distinct Scottish accent, continue to inform claims to a Scottish national identity. Also, other forms of expression, including a rejection of English political attitudes, can be used to express one’s right to a Scottish national identity. Therefore, as Ichijo (2004, 143) has earlier stated, Scottish public opinion on Europe is “…conditioned by Scotland’s relationship to England and Britain as a whole.”

In the year of 2020 the SNP have renewed calls for European Union leaders to “leave a light on for Scotland” in the hope that an independent Scotland will re-join the EU as an independent nation in the future. During the final days of 2020, as the Brexit agreement was slowly finalised, SNP party spokesman Ian Blackford stated:

Scotland will remain a European nation, we will continue to build strong links, and we will be back to take our place as an independent member of the EU. (Ian Blackford Statement Dec 31st 2020)

The debate around European membership is therefore on-going and continues to play a key role in the Scottish governments discourse and policy. Meanwhile, public support for independence in Scotland appears to have grown in the last year in particular. A recent poll conducted by What Scotland Thinks posed the question “How would you vote in a Scottish independence referendum if held now?” to the Scottish public. Of those sampled those supporting a Yes vote were recorded at 57%, with No recorded at 43% (What Scotland Thinks 2021). While polls can never be a truly accurate illustration of voting intentions, these figures do reflect a significant increase in support for Scottish independence since the 2014 referendum.
in which Yes returned 45% of the vote. It would appear that Nicola Sturgeon is not wrong in her claims that “Brexit has changed the game on Scottish independence” (Sturgeon, 2020).

Recent polling results suggest that support for Scottish independence has further grown in 2020, a year dominated by the COVID-19 health crisis (Curtice, 2020). Public support for independence appears to have been further strengthened by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon’s performance during the crisis, who the Scottish public perceive to have handled the pandemic well (YouGov 2020). Conversely, public trust in Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the UK government has declined during the same period (YouGov, 2020). Even before the pandemic, polls showed that support for Scottish independence had consecutively continued to grow in the intervening years since the first independence referendum in 2014. It would appear that both Brexit and the COVID-19 crisis have contributed to a rise in nationalist public sentiment in Scotland. It is necessary, however, to revisit one of the main reasons why the independence movement failed the first-time round, due to a perceived social connection to the wider British state among Scottish voters.

Sobolewska and Ford (2020, 251), in their analysis of the two referenda Scotland has witnessed in the past 6-years, believed that “…most Scots also feel a stronger sense of affinity and loyalty to Britain than English feel to the EU.” Therefore, in 2014 people in Scotland felt strong connections to their compatriots around the rest of the UK which led to the majority No result in the Scottish independence referendum. Conversely, in 2016, voters in England especially did not feel themselves to be connected to Europe and the European Union, which gave rise to the Leave result in the Brexit referendum. However, from an examination of the aforementioned polls suggest that the divide between Scottish voters and the UK government
has continued to grow in the past year, and that the connection between the Scottish public and wider British identities may have shifted somewhat in the years since 2014. The larger question remains over whether a second referendum on Scottish independence will ever be permitted to go ahead and under what terms the UK government would agree to such a request.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored how banal cosmopolitan nationalism (Beck, 2002) in Scotland has been operationalised through public discourse on European Union membership, immigration and the economy. These examples have illustrated that an anti-Brexit, pro-European and pro-immigration stance has been adopted by the SNP in Scotland to frame the country as distinctive, outward-looking and progressive in character. This discourse has helped fuel cosmopolitan nationalist sentiment in the country which has been illustrated to have grown since the first referendum on Scottish independence was held in 2014.

The SNP have been able to forge a niche brand of neo-nationalist politics which has diverted Scottish voters’ frustrations away from Eurosceptic sentiment to foster an anti-Westminster and anti-Conservative political ideology in particular. While the SNP were previously a Eurosceptic party, since 1988 they have sought to establish a cosmopolitan Scottish nationalism with the goal of achieving independence for Scotland while retaining EU membership. Examples provided from SNP discourse and wider public debates has illustrated that Scottish pro-European sentiments are often founded in pro-migration and economic prosperity terms. Such discourse, however has been limited in terms of developing a broader understanding of the benefits of union membership. Commentators, including Salamone (2020) have stated that
“…the Scottish public would benefit from a more meaningful European debate, grounded in greater substance and reflection”.

In this chapter I have illustrated that the often-cited political and ideological differences with England, particularly regarding public attitudes to immigration and civic citizenship, are often exaggerated in Scottish political discourse. Evidence has been presented which shows that the Scottish and English public hold broadly similar views on immigration, an issue often cited as an area of contention. Furthermore, the majority of Scots continue to base Scottish citizenship claims on the grounds of ethnocentric criteria, namely birthplace and ancestry. These findings stand in contrast to the so-called progressive and outward-looking Scotland narratives which can be seen in political rhetoric.

At the time of writing, and over 4-years since the Brexit referendum, the UK has now finalised its departure from the European Union. Scottish Parliamentary Elections were held in May 2021, in which arguments over Scottish membership of the EU played a decisive role in influencing voting behaviour. The SNP has been able to expand on its electoral success of the UK general election in 2019 to form a majority government within the parliament, supported by the Scottish Greens. Europe is a mechanism through which Scotland can brand itself as different from the rest of the UK, as illustrated through the examples provided in this chapter. This Scottish case study has shown that cosmopolitan and neo-nationalist movements are operating alongside the European Union, rather than against it. What might at first appear a contradiction in terms, through the features of globalisation and nationalism, has been shown to be an integral part of the movement for an independence Scotland. The Scottish case will
have significant ramifications for other European member states, dealing with their own instances of minority nationalist movements.

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