# Britain's Nationalist Moment:
# The Claims-Making of the SNP and UKIP

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## Abstract

Britain is having a nationalist moment. The rise of the Scottish National Party and the UK Independence Party marks a major shift in the dynamics of British party competition and of the constitutional debates around Scotland and the European Union. Yet the field of British political studies has been reluctant to directly compare these parties or even to consider them within the same framework. The result is that the commonalities of their nationalist claims-making have been overlooked. In this article, I review the existing literatures dealing with the SNP and UKIP, and present a new analysis of these parties in terms of the shared structure and style of their respective arguments for Scottish independence and withdrawal from the EU. While not a replacement for quantitative polling and other current approaches, I argue that this approach can open new angles for political studies and contribute to clarifying important political debates.

> Independence would give Scotland the responsibility for making decisions about its future as part of an international, globalized environment, making a full contribution to the interdependent world.
>
> Scottish Government Independence White Paper (2009, p. 18)

> I believe that leaving the Union and reclaiming our destiny will create the most exciting opportunity for national renewal in our lifetime.
>
> Nigel Farage, UKIP Leader (2013)

Britain is having a nationalist moment.[1] The Scottish National Party (SNP) has been in

power in the devolved Scottish government since 2007, and remains the leading party in

Scotland despite the September 2014 defeat of its long-promised referendum on full

independence. Meanwhile, the eurosceptic UK Independence Party (UKIP) has emerged as a

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[1] Here I do mean (Great) Britain, not the United Kingdom, because of course the politics of nationalism in Northern Ireland are much different and have been highly salient for much longer.

major challenger to the political establishment, finishing first with 27% of the vote in the 2014

European Parliament election (the first time that anyone other than the Labour and Conservative

Parties has achieved this since the 1979 advent of directly-elected MEPs), and took its first seats

in Westminster[2] with two by-election victories. Moreover, pressure from UKIP has been keenly

felt by the ruling Conservatives, with Prime Minister David Cameron promising to renegotiate

Britain's role in Europe and hold an 'in-out' referendum on EU membership in the next

Parliament (should his party be re-elected; Mason, 2014). Whatever the eventual fate of that

promise, and whatever the future of Scottish independence, it is already clear that these parties

are making a mark on what has long been considered a two- (or at most three-) party system.

As we would expect, these parties are receiving an increasing amount of academic

attention. However, the field of British political studies has been notably reluctant to directly

compare these parties or even to analyse them within the same framework. The SNP is generally

treated as part of an ethnoregionalist party family including Welsh, Basque, Catalan, and

Quebecois counterparts (Keating, 1998); or, more recently, as a conventional party of

government campaigning on 'competence' rather than 'constitution' (Johns, Mitchell, and

Carman, 2013). UKIP, by contrast, has been treated as a right-wing populist party that gathers its

support from disaffected voters opposed to the political establishment (Abedi and Lundberg,

2009). Though these approaches each capture important features—I am not arguing that SNP

does not campaign in part on its record in office, or that a sometimes-xenophobic populism is not

part of UKIP's electoral appeal—they ignore a common feature of these parties, which is the

quintessentially *nationalist* cast of their key policy arguments.

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[2] Not counting a handful of defections by sitting members.

In this article, I propose an alternative to the existing categorizations of UKIP and the SNP, which focus on policy positions and votes, and have become compartmentalized into 'party family' analyses. Instead, I analyse the claims-making of these parties, the particular ways in which they structure and frame their central policy arguments, using qualitative textual analysis of a selection of manifestos, leaders' speeches, and other publications. Through this, I show that there are significant similarities between the way that the SNP argues that Scots must be able to govern themselves apart from the UK, and the way that UKIP claims that the British nation needs to regain its sovereignty from Europe. This analysis can help us to better understand the way that these parties have shaped and will likely continue to shape British political discourse in the post-New Labour, post-financial crisis era.

**Literature and Theory**

In this section, I review the literature on the SNP and UKIP, before proceeding to distinguish them from my focus on nationalist claims-making. Broadly speaking, the literatures on each party are divided into two broad strands. For the SNP, these are approaches that treat the party as an independence movement, and approaches that treat it as a vote- and office-seeking party. In reality, of course, the SNP is both. These approaches are not really in opposition; rather, what distinguish them are their particular substantive emphases. The independence literature focuses on the subject of Scottish independence (or autonomy), analyses the party in terms of its strategy for achieving that goal, and tends to compare it to other well-known separatist movements. The party politics literature, by contrast, is concerned with the party's performance in elections, and analyses independence only as the centrepiece of its political platform. A similar divide exists in interpreting UKIP. One current (which, generally speaking, emerged

earlier) understands the party as the partisan standard-bearer of a strong eurosceptic movement within the UK; the second, more recent current has drawn from the comparative literature on right-wing populist parties to explain UKIP's position in the British party system. Notably, and probably not by accident, this theoretical division follows the active political debates about the nature of the party (whether it should be a broad populist force or a pressure group on the European issue).

*SNP: Movement or Party of Government?*

The literature on the SNP as an independence movement considers Scottish nationalism to be a particularly strong variant of the 'new regionalism' (Keating, 1998), or 'new nationalism' (Laible 2008), that is emerging in world politics.[3] This new wave of nationalism is pragmatic rather than romantic, and is said to be in part the product of globalization. According to this view, the secular decline of *existing* state authorities associated with globalization does not mean a decline in the desirability of statehood by 'stateless nations' like Scotland. Rather, it has created more space for them to emerge (Keating, 2002, 2009). In more concrete economic terms, this school argues that globalization and Europeanization affirmatively *promote* new nationalisms 'by cutting the benefits of integration and by reducing the obstacles to independence or the various forms of autonomy' (Paquin, 2002, p. 55; see also Holitscher and Suter, 1999 and Sorens, 2004). This literature marks a stark shift from the previous assumption that secessionist movements are hostile to globalization as 'corrosive of traditional values and an impediment to grand political projects' (Sorens, 2004, p. 728, summarizing *inter alia* Keating, 1996). Applying the new nationalism approach to SNP's particular articulation of nationalism,

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[3] This strand could also include debates about the meaning of 'Scottish-ness' in SNP nationalism—e.g., the ethnic versus civic nationalism question (Keating, 1997, p. 690; Peter Lynch, 2002, pp. 4-5).

Hepburn (2009), argues that the party has developed a 'post-sovereign' understanding of independence (see also Tierney, 2005). This understanding entails Scotland becoming a coequal member of an *inter*dependent, multi-layered system of governance with 'degrees of independence' in different policy areas.

The party politics literature on the SNP tends to run parallel to the independence movement approach (sometimes as different publications from the same scholars; e.g., Lynch, 2002, 2011), rather than intersecting with it. As with the study of party politics generally, there are a number of different strands to this analysis. The most basic divide is between organisational and party competition approaches, which take internal and external perspectives on the party, respectively.[4] One of the most prominent organisational approaches to SNP is the 'party lifespan' theory, originally pioneered by Pedersen (1982), which applies an evolutionary perspective to the institutional and strategic changes that parties undergo as they pass 'thresholds' over time. 'Different stages in a party's evolution can be identified, each characterized by its own dominant and different quality' (Elias and Tronconi, 2011, p. 3). SNP, for its part, has by now passed all of these thresholds, albeit its 'threshold of governance' came only at the regional level (Peter Lynch, 2011). From this perspective, it is the changed institutional environment that accompanies this evolution which can explain the recent developments in SNP strategy and rhetoric. Conversely, the external, party competition approach interprets SNP actions in light of the electoral incentives the party faces vis-à-vis its competitors. Sometimes these are analyses of policy position in the Downsian Party tradition, usually where the SNP is included among all parties in studies of general elections (e.g., Endersby and Galatas,

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[4] I am leaving aside a second research avenue in this vein, the surveys and demographic studies of SNP members and supporters (Curtice, 2009; Mackay and Kenny, 2009; Mitchell, Bennie, and Johns, 2012), as I am focused here on claims-making at the level of elite communications.

1998). More often, however, studies focused on SNP electoral strategy incorporate the

Performance Party model, likely reflecting the dominance of that tradition in Britain since the

1990s. Looking at the 2011 election, Johns, Mitchell, and Carman use extensive survey data

from the Scottish Election Study to show that 'the SNP won its majority for the most mundane of

electoral reasons: most voters thought it could do a better job in office than its rivals' (2013, p.

158). This was a confirmation of findings by Johns et al. (2010) about the 2007 election. In line

with dominant readings of British politics generally (Clarke et al., 2009), this finding suggests

that economic performance criteria were more important in determining votes than the

independence question (a positional issue), and makes clear that SNP can (indeed, ought to be)

treated as a 'normal' party in terms of political competition. This is largely why the

independence movement and party politics readings exist separately, because the latter do not

consider the former of great importance in the task of explaining elections (which conversely

implies that electoral dynamics cannot be *that* important to shaping the independence argument).

*UKIP: Single-Issue or Right-Wing Populist?*

The divide in studies of UKIP has been between understanding it as a single-issue

eurosceptic party and understanding it as part of the larger wave of right-wing populism in

Europe. Key to the first is the simple pair of observations that the party opposes continued EU

membership and that throughout its existence a sizeable portion of the British public has

expressed deep misgivings about the process of European integration—the percentage who say

they would vote for withdrawal in a hypothetical referendum has hovered around 40% between

1994 and 2003 (Baker et al., 2008, p. 104).[5] The simplest frame for interpreting the party, then, is

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[5] It should be acknowledged, however, that the electoral math is not quite this simple; during the same period, the number who considered Europe an 'important issue' only averaged about 30% (Baker et al., 2008, p. 106).

as a 'single-issue party' carrying the banner of British euroscepticism (Usherwood, 2008). In particular, UKIP is identified with the current of 'hard' euroscepticism (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2003, 2008), also called 'eurorejectionism' (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002), which rejects both the principle of ever closer union as well as the current state of the EU institutions.[6] Whatever the label, the consequence of this approach for the study of UKIP as a party has been a focus on the structural challenges facing 'single-issue' parties, to the exclusion of other relevant dynamics. According to Simon Usherwood, the party's history has been defined by a fundamental tension 'between those who feel that the objective is fundamental to the nature of the party and cannot be compromised at any point, and those who accept a need to be flexible in the short run, in order to have a better chance of achieving the objective in the longer term' (2008, p. 256). In essence, so this argument runs, the context and institutional form of a political party impels certain actions that may be at odds with its core philosophical principles. Thus, for example, the organisational advantages gained by the party taking up seats in the European Parliament outweighed concerns about legitimizing that institution. Of course, this is not without cost in terms of internal dissension, with the grassroots supporters of most single-issue parties favouring ideals over expedience (Usherwood, 2008, p. 261).

This approach implicitly challenges the conventional wisdom that considers European issues (and European elections) to be of the 'second-order,' subordinate to the 'first-order' competition between parties of government over bread-and-butter issues (Reif and Schmitt, 1980; Marsh, 1998). However, the existence of independent eurosceptic parties suggests that a growing number of voters consider European integration a 'first-order' issue. This is reinforced

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[6] Note that while 'euroscepticism' has become broadly accepted in academic and political discourse, more specific terms are still contested. For example, party sympathizers prefer the more positive 'eurorealist' (Gardner, 2006), but Kopecky and Mudde's similar-sounding 'europragmatist' refers to a different current entirely.

by data showing that the pattern of eurosceptic mobilization in the UK tends to track European

rather than domestic political events (Usherwood, 2007), and by an increasing recognition of

social movement-style opposition to the EU outside of the party system (Fitzgibbon, 2013). Still,

outside of these advances over existing approaches, this line of analysis has spoken more to the

study of euroscepticism as an idea than to party politics as a field (i.e., in its framing as 'party-

based euroscepticism'; Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2003).

The major alternative understanding of UKIP, which has recently become more

prominent, is grounded in comparative work on parties and party systems. This strand interprets

UKIP as part of an emergent European family of right-wing populist parties, with its anti-EU

position a particular expression of a more fundamental tendency to interpret society as being

fundamentally divided between the people (noble) and the elites (corrupt). This type of party has

been given several different labels in the literature (associated with slightly different definitions):

Abedi and Lundberg call UKIP 'a right wing-populist Anti-Political Establishment (APE) party',

with the APE characteristic as the primary feature (2009, p. 72, drawing on Abedi, 2004); others

follow Mudde's terminology of 'populist radical right parties' (PRRPs) (2013, p. 1); while

Eatwell settles for 'the extreme right' (2000). The label, in this case, is less important than the

underlying political force that UKIP is said to represent. UKIP is said to be populist in that it

'asserts that there is a fundamental divide between the political establishment and the people'

and anti-establishment in that it 'challenges the status quo in terms of major policy issues and

political system issues' (Abedi and Lundberg, 2009, p. 74).[7] The additional prefix 'right-wing' is

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[7] Abedi and Lundberg include a third criterion for populist APE parties, '[a] party that perceives itself as a
challenger to the parties that make up the political establishment' (2009, p. 74), which seems redundant in light of
the other two, but certainly applies to UKIP.

not often systematically addressed, but has become a commonplace in reference to UKIP's

mostly-Tory origins and its positions on immigration and the welfare state.

        This approach has been empirically developed in two ways: On the first account, Abedi

and Lundberg document examples of populist logic in UKIP communications, such as claims

that all of the establishment parties are basically the same and that its own leaders do not

consider themselves politicians, but rather 'people from all backgrounds who feel deeply what

the majority of British people feel' (2009, p. 76). They also note that the eurorejectionist position

is not only a challenge to the status quo in policy terms, but an attempt to 'turn back the clock' in

terms of the British constitution (2009, p. 75). In terms of indirect evidence about the party,

Lynch, Whitaker, and Loomes present data from election surveys in 2009 and 2010. These data

show that UKIP votes tended to correlate geographically with votes from the far-right British

National Party, and that the party's voters were 'slightly older, more likely to be male, white and

drawn from social classes C2, D and E [skilled working class, working class, and non-working],

but less likely to have a degree, compared with voters for the three main parties' (Lynch,

Whitaker, and Loomes, 2012, pp. 747-49). These findings lend empirical support to the claim

that UKIP is fundamentally a populist party drawing support from generally disaffected voters

on the right. In the end, this interpretation comes back to a similar place as the 'eurosceptic

party' alternative: There is still a tension between principle and pragmatism, in this case seen to

be endemic to populist parties. In particular, the democratic organization that would follow

populist norms sits awkwardly with the central organization required of successful political

parties. Abedi and Lundberg link this particularly with the 'party life cycle' approach discussed

in the previous chapter: 'We argue that until the party reaches the appropriate stage in its life

cycle, UKIP will find it impossible to take advantage of any electoral good fortune that might come its way' (2009, p. 85).

Of course, whether or not the authors would think of them in these terms, the eurosceptic and populist interpretations of UKIP are ideal types, which are neither collectively exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. The party can, and does, have eurosceptic and populist (and nationalist) elements (just as the SNP blends nationalist movement with conventional party of government). In fact, some recent empirical data suggest that this conceptual blending may reflect UKIP's concrete reality; according to this view, the party's recent success can be seen as the product of an informal electoral coalition between 'strategic eurosceptics and polite xenophobes' (Ford, Goodwin, and Cutts, 2011). The former are anti-EU voters who want to send a message to the large parties (especially the Tories) by voting UKIP; the latter, adhering to the populist image, are closer to the far-right (especially on the immigration issue) but consider UKIP a more palatable choice than extreme right alternatives like the British National Party. Another recent analysis of survey data suggests that the 'strategic eurosceptic' angle may be particularly important to driving defections among loyal Tories; that is, support for UKIP from actual Conservative Party members (Webb and Bale, 2014). Likewise, combining the different lines of empirical investigation in their recent book on the party, Ford and Goodwin (2014) generally align with the standard right-wing populist narrative discussed here, but also—crucially—note that the particular importance of Europe in the party's messaging sets them apart.


*Nationalism: Claims and Frames*

There are distinct opportunities for overlap in these literatures; the 'eurosceptic party' approach is in some ways similar to the treatments of SNP as an independence or nationalist

movement. However, UKIP is rarely discussed as a nationalist party. Yet UKIP's basic claim—

that the highest priority for the British polity is to assure that it is fully governed by the national

state—is a nationalist one.

'Nationalism' is of course a long-contested concept in social science, encompassing

political, cultural, and sociological conceptions of what it means to be and become a 'nation.'

Gellner famously articulated national*ism* 'a political principle, which holds that the political and

national unit should be congruent' (1983, p. 1). This definition can be useful regardless of the

particular content assigned to the signifier 'national unit.' It is this point, the nature of the

national unit and its historical development, which occupies much of the voluminous nationalism

literature. Anderson (1983), for example, argues that nations are a kind of 'imagined

communities' which emerged from the socioeconomic processes of modernization, particularly

print capitalism. By contrast, the ethnosymbolist school associated with Armstrong (1982) and

Smith (1991) focuses on the necessity of long-standing ethnic symbols (like founding myths) for

modern national identities to exist. While it is true that the SNP and UKIP 'imagine' different

national communities (Scotland versus the UK), these literatures would point to a set of

questions about the historical origins and symbolic content of these identities that is logically

separate from the political thrust of their claims (independence). Likewise, other scholarship on

nationalism has engaged with different models of nationhood, such as the ethnic versus civic

nationalism question (Ignatieff 1993) and the idea of a 'new nationalism' (discussed above),

which again do not necessarily conflict with nationalism as a generic principle of political

legitimacy.

I thus return here to Gellner's notion of a political claim because my aim is to analyse

SNP and UKIP discourse in their political contexts, rather than to evaluate or historicize their

respective imagined communities. What is relevant to my analysis is that both parties hold that

the current constitutional status of the UK violates this principle of legitimacy, in the SNP's case

by the incorporation of the Scottish nation into the union-state, and in UKIP's case by the

transfer of British political powers to the EU. It might be said that UKIP is actually a better fit

with Gellner's ideal type than the SNP because it rejects the latter's 'post-sovereign'

understanding of independence. But when we look purely at the party's set of claims against the

political status quo, the SNP's 'new nationalism' is largely irrelevant: However a post-

independence Scotland might be organized, it is axiomatic for the party that such decisions be

made only by Scots (by referenda or through their elected representatives). Likewise, the fact

that the party uses a civic rather than ethnic definition of who is Scottish (the referendum

electorate was all UK/Commonwealth/EU citizens resident in Scotland, but not ethnic Scots

living elsewhere) is secondary to the core argument. In the end, the SNP and UKIP both fit the

definition because there claims are two sides of the same coin: Whatever the value of multilevel

governance arrangements (like the EU or a hypothetical post-union Britain), they are no

substitute for a hard-core of explicit (parliamentary) sovereignty.

     To properly identify and explicate this important parallel between two rising parties, we

need a new approach to categorizing political parties that moves beyond the existing silos of 'left

or right parties', 'regional parties', and 'populist parties'. I propose that we proceed by analysing

the 'claims-making' of parties, not just who they are and what they stand for, but *how* they make

their arguments in the context of political talk and text. In this case, I show that the SNP and

UKIP are of the same type in terms of the way they develop and frame their fundamentally

nationalist claims. This can be seen as an incorporation of party politics into the tradition of

rhetorical political studies (Finlayson and Martin, 2008), which has tended to focus on the

rhetorical performances of individual leaders (though see Atkins, 2011). While leaders'

personality, styles, and beliefs are undeniably important in shaping the language that is used, that

rhetorical language also contributes to binding and defining parties. Thus, understanding the

details of speeches and texts is equally important to understanding parties as organised actors.

Note that I refer to claims-making rather than argumentation, as is more common in

rhetorical or 'political discourse' studies (Finlayson and Martin, 2008; Fairclough and

Fairclough, 2012). This is for three reasons: First, I wish to deemphasize deliberation and

decision-making, in order to focus on party competition (for votes). Second, I want to emphasize

the contentious nature of the process—in the contentious politics tradition, these nationalists

claims would be categorized as either programme or standing claims (the 'Scottish' and 'British'

identity claims being mostly taken for granted in these cases; Tilly and Tarrow, 2007, pp. 83-85).

Though made by parties rather than social movements, the claims are much the same. Finally, I

want to suggest that, in practice, the political claims often blur together with truth claims. It has

often been *empirical* claims about the nature of global and European economic order that

underpin the *normative* imperatives of Scottish or UK autonomy. The former are often

contestable claims, but they are presented as taken for granted in the context of the political

arguments. This echoes a social constructionist understanding of what would come to be called

contentious politics as 'the activities of individuals or groups making assertions of grievances

and claims with respect to some putative conditions' (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977, p 75).


**Textual Analysis**

In this section, I use a qualitative textual analysis of SNP and UKIP speeches, manifestos,

and other publications to explicate the way that these parties articulate their respective nationalist

claims. Though this approach is closer to a rhetorical than a critical discourse analysis in terms of

substantive focus (intentional communications rather than pervasive language) and theoretical

foundations (party politics rather than Gramscian social theory), I nevertheless draw in part from

the textual analysis toolkit offered by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)—especially

Fairclough's *Analysing Discourse* (2003). In accord with this CDA methodological tradition, this

should not be understood as a counting exercise. I do not claim that the passages discussed below

are representative in a statistical sense, nor that there is a precise category of 'nationalist claims'

that is more prominent in this corpus than other types of language. Rather, these are passages that

I have identified as exemplary of the distinctive ways that the SNP and UKIP present the claims

that are at the heart of their programmes (and party identities).

I divide this discussion into two parts: The first deals with the structure of the parties'

nationalist claims-making. That is, the meaning ascribed to national sovereignty and the (explicit

and implicit) arguments for why it is important in the context of contemporary political realities.

The second part deals with the style of claims-making, the linguistic choices that are ancillary to

the basic claims but which serve to make connections with the parties' other political goals—

generally speaking, to present them as 'electable'. This is similar to Fairclough's understanding

of the stylistic aspects of text as representing/constructing the identity of the author (2003, p.

102), in this case the collective identities of the parties. Note that while a useful heuristic, this

division should not be carried too far. In practice, the difference between structure and style is

not so rigid—different ways of justifying a claim themselves carry stylistic weight, just as

stylistic associations can lend credence to concrete claims.


*Structure*

A striking feature of the way that both parties structure their nationalist claims is that independence is often justified on economic grounds as much as political. For the SNP this can be seen in *The SNP's Medium Term Recovery Strategy*, a short policy publication designed to accompany the party's 1992 General Election manifesto. This document provides both a costing of the commitments in the manifesto as well as model-based projections of how the economic commitments would grow the Scottish economy. Consequently, much of the document is technical, but the passages that are not make this notably unromantic nationalist argument clear: 'The SNP has never argued for Independence on purely constitutional grounds. Independence in Europe is not an end in itself. Rather, the economic power of an independent Parliament will be the means towards security vital economic and social objectives in Scotland' (SNP, 1992, p. 1).

This relationship is developed more extensively in the following passage from the foreign policy section of the 2005 Westminster manifesto (headed 'An Outward Looking Scotland'):

> In today's interdependent world, what it means to be independent has changed. It is about taking decisions for ourselves and being accountable for them. It's about having the tools to build a better country by taking responsibility and deciding how we want to use our sovereignty - when to pool it and when to retain it.
> As more and more decisions are taken supranationally in a globalized environment, having our own voice to defend our national interests and protect our distinctive culture is more essential than ever.

(SNP, 2005, p. 34)

The fact of global interdependence is here introduced merely as a presumption of the first sentence, rather than an explicit claim (which could be more easily challenged). Crucially, then, this passage is neither an argument about interdependence (taken as a given without elaboration) or an argument about Scottish independence *per se*. Rather, it is a claim based on the premise that the underlying *meaning* of independence has changed. The SNP's nationalist goals are rendered as *following from* this overarching transformation.

Outside of the party's official publication channels, this claims-making was extended in

2004 by SNP MSP and future Scottish Justice Minister Kenny MacAskill. He authored a treatise

called *Building a Nation: Post Devolution Nationalism in Scotland* that centres on the need for

the party to develop itself into a holistic social democratic force. It is notable for a frank

discussion of the relationship between globalization and nationalism, an important element of the

SNP's economic argument for nationalism:

> Scotland is in transition but what to? It's a journey being made not just in the Devolution settlement but also in all aspects of Scottish society. From the constitution of the economy to religion to race Scotland is changing. Pressured from without by the effects of Globalization and from within by a Parliament growing in powers and stature. It is a small Nation on the periphery of a growing EU and a shrinking world. Post 9/11 and its fall out what is clear is that all Nations no matter how big and powerful are interdependent. What then does Independence mean in an interdependent world and why is it relevant?
>
> (MacAskill, 2004, p. 15)

MacAskill goes on to answer this question with the claims that 'Independence is not inconsistent

with an interdependent world but essential to participating in it,' and that '[j]ust as Scotland has

to become comfortable with Devolution, Globalization, and a New World Order, so the SNP

must adapt to the new terrain' (2004, pp. 15-16). The argument about globalization and

independence is further developed in a preliminary white paper on plans for independence,

published during SNP's first term as the party of government in Scotland: 'Independence would

give Scotland the responsibility for making decisions about its future as part of an international,

globalized environment, making a full contribution to the interdependent world' (Scottish

Government, 2009, p. 18).

This rhetoric articulates a distinct claim for an independent Scotland that would be

oriented toward 'responsibility' in the taking of decisions within a 'globalized environment.'

This Scotland would have new 'tools' and a 'new voice' for achieving collective goals. And it

would be sovereign, but only as sovereign as it freely chooses to be. For UKIP, the imperative of

reclaiming full British sovereignty from Brussels follows much the same logic. Indeed, there are

remarks in Nigel Farage's Leader's speech to the 2013 UKIP conference that are virtually

indistinguishable from SNP discourse: 'I believe that leaving the Union and reclaiming our

destiny will create the most exciting opportunity for national renewal in our lifetime. […] We get

our own seat in on the bodies that actually run the world' (Farage, 2013).

Both parties also articulate explicitly macroeconomic claims for sovereignty. On the SNP

side, Leader Alex Salmond gave a speech at Harvard during a 2008 US tour called 'Free to

Prosper: Creating the Celtic Lion economy'. The title references the so-called Asian Tiger

economies and their spectacular growth over the previous decade; Salmond argues that a similar

'Arc of Prosperity' exists in Northern Europe, including Ireland, Iceland, Norway, and,

potentially, Scotland. This notion attracted some derision after the financial crisis, but what is

important for the present purpose is the particular way that he articulates the contemporary

significance of statehood:

> During the first half of the last century and perhaps later, smaller nations faced two major disadvantages in the global system. One was guaranteeing their security. The other was gaining access to markets. However, over time global markets have opened to countries large and small while the threats to international security do not come by and large from territorial acquisition but from international terrorism. And in this environment, the disadvantages of smaller nations have disappeared, and they are now exercising their natural economic strengths. Flexibility. Speed of decision-making. And the ability to clearly define national interests in pursuit of a clear economic strategy.
>
> (Salmond, 2008)

This suggests a close connection between sovereignty (at the international level) and

effective management of the economy. UKIP's 1997 General Election manifesto (its first), lays

out a similar argument in the first section presenting its principle argument for withdrawal from

the EU (under the heading 'Trading Relationships'):

Our release from the EU's external trade barriers will allow stronger trading links with countries outside Europe, in South East Asia for instance, and with our natural trading partners of the Commonwealth who were sorely snubbed when we joined the EU. Given our language and business methods, it is with these dynamic and developing countries that our trading advantages lie. Our interests do not lie in further cosy trading relations with the countries of the EU, which are intent on binding their economies with their centralised bureaucratic structures, and whose economic stagnation is currently being aggravated by the struggle to meet the fiscal requirements for joining the single currency.

(UKIP, 1997)

This is repeated with a more explicit reference to globalization in the 2001 General Election manifesto (the first subsection under 'The Economy' being 'Trade and Globalization'):

Through the Commonwealth, Britain has links with some of the world's fastest growing economies, such as those of the Indian subcontinent. Our relationship with the United States remains unique. These connections equip us to take advantage of global opportunities. EU membership, by contrast, holds us back in the world - it locks us into an over-regulated system based on the principle of 'the state knows best'.

(UKIP, 2001)

Finally, in UKIP's 2005 General Election manifesto, 'Trade' appears as the first heading in the economic policy section. Under this heading, UKIP articulates the economic import of its position in the following terms:

Our release from the EU's common external tariffs will also enable us to strengthen our trade relationships with countries outside the EU such as the countries of the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), the Far East and our natural trading partners in the Commonwealth who share our language and business methods. At the same time we shall regain our independent seat in the World Trade Organisation which we shall use to counter any trade restrictions from the EU and to press for further expansion of global free trade. More open trade will also do far more to help less developed countries than any amount of aid or debt forgiveness.

(UKIP, 2005, p. 5)

As in the other passages discussed above, nationalist claims-making here takes the form of calls for greater involvement with the global economy, stronger international relationships, and a willingness to take on the responsibilities that this entails (not a desire to escape the responsibilities of staying in the UK or the EU). Probably by design, the contrast could not be clearer with contemporary New Labour warnings about eurosceptics and Scottish nationalists as

dangerous isolationists (Labour Party, 1999, p. 19; Blair, 2007). Though they do not agree on

what is the appropriate national unit, or on almost any question of social policy, the SNP and

UKIP are united on this point.

*Style*

The particular style of SNP and UKIP claims-making is closely related to the structure of

their arguments. The parties make certain stylistic choices that signal a forward-looking and

responsible attitude, rather than a nostalgic nationalism. In part this can be seen to reinforce the

economic thrust of explicit independence arguments, but should also be seen in relation to the

parties' need to attract votes (and not just sympathy) from the public. In that light, this style fits

the contemporary tenor of British party competition, which has come to emphasize responsible

economic management and other 'valence' issues over ideology (Clarke et al., 2009).

The stylistic emphasis on dynamism is reflected as early as the SNP's manifesto for the

June 1989 European Elections, the first major articulation of the party's pro-EU 'independence

in Europe' position:

> The people of Scotland face a crucial choice at these European Elections. If they support
> the Conservative, Labour or Democrat parties, they will be voting to isolate Scotland, to
> place Scotland at the periphery of the United Kingdom and of Europe. If they support the
> Scottish National Party, they will be sending a clear message that Scotland demands a
> positive, forward-looking and imaginative future as an independent member of the
> European Community.
>
> (SNP, 1989, p. 2)

The first passage is an unusually-explicit example of a party trying to define the terms of an

electoral decision ('If they support…they will…'). Grammatical and political agency are jointly

accorded to the voters, such that the party is less making a promise about its own actions than a

warning about those of the electorate: Scottish voters' endorsement of the British political

establishment is linked to the continued isolation of Scotland from the European mainstream.

Later in the manifesto, the party frames independence as 'the opportunity to break free from

Westminster and the failures of the past, and build a new future as an equal partner in Europe'

(SNP, 1989, p. 33).  Having been foreshadowed by the title 'Scotland's Future—Independence in

Europe,' these kind of references to the future appear throughout the text. Meanwhile,

conventional nationalist paeans to Scottish history are conspicuously absent. The only references

to the past are in calls for the '*re*-establishment' of the Scottish Parliament and Scotland's

education reputation, but even here the allusion to prior glories is embedded in an active verb. As

nationalisms go, the overall style is decidedly un-romantic.

      UKIP likewise distances itself from romanticism. In the January 1994 issue of the party

newsletter, founding-Leader Alan Sked makes the following charge to members:

> Our programme will not therefore be one of turning the clock back to the 1950's or any
> other period in the mythical history of Merrie England. On the contrary, we shall have to
> develop policies which meet the challenges of tomorrow and we shall have to seek votes
> not merely from former Conservatives (this is not a Conservative rejects party) but from
> Labour and Liberal Party members and from anyone else who has a vote. This is a
> serious party and it will only deserve to be taken seriously if it can appeal to all sections
> of British society.
>
>                                         (qtd. in Gardner, 2006, p. 39)

This passage is a remarkably prescient description of the political challenge that UKIP would

face in being taken seriously (as forward-looking and as something other than a glorified Tory

faction). In textual terms, this is reflected by the clear implication that an undefined 'tomorrow'

entails 'challenges' that are of a different order than those in the past. And Sked pairs that claim

(in the fourth sentence) with his call for broadening the UKIP base, implying that preparing for

the 'challenges of tomorrow' is as much a political as an intellectual endeavour. There is also, of

course, the repetition of 'serious' in the closing sentence—in total, this passage encapsulates a

particular style of claims-making, consistently pairing efforts at 'seriousness' and broad appeal

with a rejection of 'mythical Merrie England.'

In addition to being forward-looking, both parties also seek to appear outward-looking.

The 'wider world' into which an independent Scotland would enter is a theme of the SNP's 2003

Scottish Parliament manifesto. Under the very direct heading 'Outward Looking Nation,' it is

averred that 'Scotland has always been an outward looking nation. With Independence we can

once again take our full and rightful place in the international community' (SNP, 2003, p. 24).

The heavy emphasis on time in this passage ('has always been' and 'once again') serves to frame

the notion of independence in a particular way. The hypothetical moment of 'Independence'—

again, consistently capitalized as a proper noun precisely to remove that uncertainty—is rendered

not as a disjuncture but as a continuation of the past. This is a core claim of contemporary SNP

nationalism, but would be much harder to maintain if not for the reassuring references to the

'international community' incorporated into this discourse; the international affairs section of the

text has repeated references to 'partnership,' 'cooperation,' and Scots 'playing our part'.  The

understanding of contemporary world order constructed by these references underscores the

putative 'uncontroversiality' of independence.

By 2005, the reference is more pointed: 'No one argues that it is possible in the modern

world to protect every business from takeover. However, no normal country allows its key

strategic companies to disappear without considering the public and competition interest'

(Salmond, 2005; the immediate reference being to the possible foreign acquisition of privatized

energy provider Scottish Power). The structure of this claim implies that some inevitable

dynamic of 'the modern world' constrains the ability of states to control corporate takeovers.

Significantly, it also connects this invocation of the inevitability of globalization with a sharp

attack on the status quo, in that devolved Scotland is apparently not a 'normal country.' Thus, in

this passage, Salmond reminds his audience that the SNP is a party that accepts economic

realities, while also suggesting that it is the unionist parties who are outside the pale of

normality, much as the party has done with references to the European mainstream since the

1989 manifesto. The passage is indeed followed by just such a continental invocation: 'The

Germans do not allow it [unregulated takeover]. And neither do the French' (Salmond, 2005).

This also highlights the complexity of party claims-making, as an empirical claim (about the

nature of the 'modern world') threads through and underpins the political claim for independence

and the identity claim of the SNP as a responsible party.

In UKIP's 2010 General Election manifesto, we find that international trade has been

effectively downgraded, appearing along with foreign (rather than economic) policy as the

number 10 policy heading. However, the nationalist claims-making appears even more

paradoxically globalist:

> While UKIP is realistic about the difficult economic and political challenges Britain
> faces, we take a positive view of Britain's place in the world - a stark contrast to the
> defeatist and apologetic stance taken by other parties. UKIP recognises Britain as a global
> player with a global destiny and not a regional state within a 'United States of Europe'.
> (UKIP, 2010, p. 10)

Again we see the contrast between the image presented here and the regressive, isolationist

populism of which UKIP was accused by mainstream competitors. It is Europe that is seen as a

fundamentally provincial space, against a global economy that is linked with the future ('a global

destiny'). This assertion is also presented as an evident fact or empirical claim, rather than a

normative position of the party, with the verb 'recognises'.

This theme is also developed in the maiden speech in the European Parliament by UKIP

celebrity MEP Robert Kilroy-Silk after his 2004 election:

> My constituents […] do not wish to see the Constitution enacted because they see it as
> based on obsolete economic and political theories of the 1950s, of the fear of war and an
> outdated threat of communism. They see it as creating a Europe that is inward-looking,
> that is bureaucratic, that is restrictive, whereas we should be creating a Community that is
> innovative and outward-looking, that reaches out to the rest of the world, that is flexible
> and democratic.
>
> (qtd. in Daniel, 2005, p. 150)

In a widely quoted European Parliament speech five years later, Farage completed this argument

by making the converse connection between pro-EU politics and (unserious) radicalism: In reply

to a speech by EU President Herman van Rompuy, he exclaimed that 'isn't this really just the

bunker mentality? Your fanaticism is out in the open. You talked about the fact that it was a lie

to say that the nation state could exist in the 21st century globalized world' (Farage 2010). Thus,

the potentially damning political claim of UKIP as regressive extremists is rebutted indirectly,

and an alternative vision of the relationship between globalization and Europe is constructed

implicitly. The central claim, that traditional nationhood is compatible with a globalized word, is

strategically brought into this rhetoric as an assumption rather than an explicit assertion that

would need to be defended. European regionalism, then, is construed as an ideologically-driven

*misunderstanding* of the global, and euroscepticism becomes the highest form of political-

economic pragmatism.

Finally, quoting again from Farage's 2013 Leader's Speech to the UKIP Conference, we

see that Sked's warning from two decades earlier still inhabits the party's discourse: 'There are

those who say we can't go it alone. That our global influence will decline because we are small.

Those are the true voices of Little England. We speak for Great Britain'. Coupled with the SNP's

claims about the unionist parties 'isolating' Scotland, we can identify a common strategy of

using rhetorical style to cast nationalist claims as part of a modern and dynamic party

programme.

**Conclusion**

The parallel claims-making of the SNP and UKIP, combined with their rise in electoral fortunes, constitutes a nationalist moment in British politics. This is not to say that these claims exhaust the parties' political rhetoric. As the 'competence not constitution' school predicts, the SNP do devote much of their communications to bread-and-butter issues of Scottish governance. And when it comes to immigration, UKIP rhetoric is much more exclusionary than globalist: 'The first responsibility of a British government is to its own population, not to those who would like to settle here' (UKIP, 2005, p. 11). In addition to this statement of principle, the standard liberal economic argument that there is a need for large numbers of immigrant workers (here attributed to New Labour) is dismissed as 'untenable.' Indeed, the immigration 'problem' is construed as a threat to effective nationhood itself: 'As a member of the EU, Britain has *lost control* of her borders' (UKIP, 2010, p. 5).

However, this does not make the SNP and UKIP's nationalist claims-making unimportant. Regardless of developments in the near term (such as the Scottish independence referendum or UKIP's performance in the 2015 General Election), these parties have become major players in their respective constitutional debates. As a consequence, the way that these parties make their claims will shape the political discourse on these central issues of British governance. The degree to which these framings of the question find their way into the language of other parties will be an important subject of future research. Another area of further study, using a different methodology, would be to explore whether this form of claims-making is an elite phenomenon; in other words, do ordinary party supporters recognise this language? This would allow us to better understand the political processes involved, but finding that there is a

disconnect between the elite and the base would not invalidate this analysis. Voters choose to support parties for different reasons; consider UKIP's coalition of 'strategic eurosceptics and polite xenophobes' (Ford, Goodwin, and Cutts, 2011). The fact that these multiple motivations have been articulated through this nationalist claims-making—which in UKIP's case is distinct from both euroscepticism and xenophobia *per se*—is an important political observation in its own right.

Already this approach can help us understand how we got to this point: The nationalists' ability to outmanoeuvre mainstream (especially New Labour) delegitimization can be linked to the incorporation into their claims of the broader discourse of economic management and 'post-ideological' politics. As I have shown, this strategy was 'built-in' to the parties' claims-making in terms of both the style and substance of the argument. For the political studies literature, which has understandably been focused on the conditions and comparative context of these parties' successes, this suggests a need to return to the politics themselves, at least as a corrective. This cannot serve all analytic goals, such as being able to forecast election outcomes, but it allows us to identify the moment of party agency during which interests and context and transformed into a particular rhetorical strategy. Finally, as a contribution to political practice, I hope that this approach can provide some clarification of political debates and useful guidance to campaigners. For example, the category of 'euroscepticism' contains a variety of voices that entail very different responses from European leaders. Where the claims of anti-establishment parties are fundamentally nationalist, considering democratic legitimacy beyond the nation-state an oxymoron, attempts to respond to their rise by improving democratic accountability at the regional level will be self-defeating. Conversely, we can say that the unionist parties seem to be

taking the correct tack by responding to the economic claims-making of the SNP with largely

economic counter-arguments.

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