The Difference Between English And Scottish National Identities

National identity plays a huge role in our perception of ourselves both as individuals and as part of a country. The U.K has had an interesting and complicated past full of political and territorial gains as well as losses. For a long time, the U.K was not united at all, it is not surprising therefore that there should be some confusion when it comes to its sense of identity.

Scotland and England are two countries that could be used as an example to showcase this confusion. It is remarkable that on the 2011 census questionnaire in Scotland, results on national identity showed that only 8% of the population chose " identity only," compared to the 19.1% in England. It appears that both are united in their refusal to consider themselves primarily, but instead adopt the national identity of their countries, with people from England considering themselves mainly English and the people of Scotland considering themselves Scottish before anything else. According to the 2011 census 62% of the total population in Scotland stated that their identity was "Scottish only". In England the results speak for themselves with 57.7 of the population adopting a "solely English" identity. It seems that the "glue" of "ness" has diminished. This split is not to be taken lightly as it is safe to assume that national identity is a major influence in political decisions such as the recent E.U and Scottish Independence referenda.

England's nationalism differs from Scotland mainly because it has its roots in its glorious past. England's dominant role in history has meant that it has never felt the need to be free of state. As a result, the nationalism that has emerged there has been ethnic and exclusive, seeking to unite the indigenous population against the perceived threat of outsiders.

This form of nationalism values ethnicity over the notion of citizenship. It is generally against immigration and values a united culture as the country's strength rather than diversity. This type of nationalism is mostly favoured by those with more conservative views of the world and people that tend to consider nationality a biological category rather than a social construct. English nationalism is closely linked to the ideologies of its political parties. A more direct and extreme manifestation of this kind of nationalism is National Party. The BNP is a far-right, fascist political party based in England. It believes that only white people should be citizens of the United Kingdom, that non-white immigration should stop and that non-white people should be stripped of their UK citizenship and removed from the country. The BNP is not the only political party that shows ethnic nationalistic tendencies. As the BNP's supporters decreased another party emerged. UKIP, the UK Independence Party is a right-wing, single-issue nationalist party that focuses on the removal of the UK from the European Union. It wants to restrict all forms of immigration and revive patriotism. Even though it focuses on culture, many associate it with English patriotism and a sense of Englishness and the majority of its support stems from England.

It is therefore safe to assume that the rise of ethnic nationalism in England may have been the cause of the issue of Brexit. In times of turmoil it is easier to look outwards for people to blame rather than look inwards and try to find the root of the problem. The English voters that voted to leave the EU represented 53.38% of the country against the 46.62 that voted to remain. In

addition to that, in the 2019 elections, parts of England voted uncharacteristically in support of a Pro-Brexit party which can be interpreted as a single issue vote to get Brexit done, something that many considered a way to remove immigrants from the country. This proves that the feelings of nationalism have a huge impact on peoples' decisions and this in consequence affects the results of important processes such as elections and referenda.

Another sign of this rift between the two countries is the rise of the English identity. Even though England has not requested to be independent from the Union as Scotland has, feelings of contempt have arisen due to the increased devolution of political power to Scotland as well as the distribution of capital and Scotlands decision-making powers in Westminster for matters that only affect England.

Scotland's nationalism differs from England mainly because it has its roots in the oppression that the country has endured throughout the years. This makes Scotland's nationalism civic and all inclusive. This form of nationalism is build upon a sense of shared values amongst citizens such as openness and equality. It is shaped by the liberal ideas of tolerance and the rights of the individual. Unlike other, exclusive types of nationalism, in this type, membership is based upon choice and is not determined by ethnic identity. Civic nationalism allows individuals to lead a meaningful life as part of a whole and gives them a secure national identity, the lack of which can lead to a fragmented society. Such a nation is open to working with other countries and does not feel in any way superior.

Civic nationalism is often adopted by people with socialist and liberal ideas as well as people who hold the notion that they are part of an interconnected world community. Scotland tends to define its citizens as the people who live in the country, regardless of race and culture. Scottish nationalism is closely linked to the ideology of the Scottish National Party (SNP).

The SNP is a progressive left-of-centre party. It is explicitly nationalist in its name and what it stands for, but the nationalism it represents is of the civic type. It stands for inclusivity and diversity and presents itself as the party of the people of Scotland, whoever they are and wherever they come from. Proof of that could be considered the support it has been awarded by ethnic minorities and the existence of groups such as Africans for an Independent Scotland. English Scots for Yes and Scots Asians for Yes. The SNP has been proud of Scotlands high level of Immigration and had the first non-white MSP. In addition, while non-white residents of Scotland have the right to vote in the referendum on independence, those who are ethnically Scottish and live in the UK but not in Scotland are not allowed to cast a vote. This showcases civic nature of the country's nationalism and that ethnic origin is not as important as the commitment of living in Scotland.

It is safe to assume that the nature of Scotlands nationalism affects the people's decision in matters of national importance such us Brexit. Even though the entirety of the United Kingdom voted to leave Europe, when the results are broken down by country it is obvious that the result goes against Scotlands decision to remain. Only 38% of the country voted to leave the EU and a staggering 62% voted to remain.

Another issue that has arisen due to this discrepancy between the two countries's nationalism is the issue of Scottish independence. A clear sign of the civic nature of this issue is that despite the passionate feelings of the Scottish people towards this issue, it has never been a case of Scotland presenting itself as a superior country. On its website, the Scottish government defines

Scottish national identity as follows:

Scotland’s national and cultural identity is defined by our sense of place, our sense of history and our sense of self. It is defined by what it means to be Scottish; to live in a modern Scotland in a modern world; to have an affinity to Scotland; and to be able to participate in Scottish society.

It is remarkable that the vision of a Scottish national identity does not make use of national symbols or figures or historical landmarks. It is the decision to live in Scotland and respect its social duties and its other residents that create the image of a Scottish national identity.

This growing chasm between English and Scottish nationalism has been apparent for a while. In September of 2014, Billy Bragg published an article in the Guardian with the tittle: Exclusive: Scottish nationalism and nationalism aren’t the same. More recently, an article published by Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh in the newspaper The National bore the tittle: Scottish civic nationalism tried to save the UK from its lurch to the far right. Something needs to be done to address the polarising ideas of nationalism of these two countries. It could be said that the future of the Union depends on it.

There is nothing wrong with being proud of one’s country, language, history and accomplishments, but nationalism should not be accompanied by feelings of superiority and animosity towards other nations. Being different does not equal being lesser. It is only when nations learn to work together in harmony that the world will flourish and live in peace. Excluding any part of the population merely on grounds of birthplace or religion means to exclude a part of humanity that might bear knowledge and resources that will remain dormant and unused because people where too blind to see beyond someones skin colour or mother-tongue and into that persons mind and soul and the unlimited power of human potential.