The Scottish Council on Global Affairs

GOOD GLOBAL CITIZENS?

Scottish and English Attitudes to Foreign Policy

A SCOTTISH COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS INSIGHT

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SUMMARY

The Scottish Government's "para-diplomacy" envisions Scotland acting as a "Good Global Citizen," projecting progressive policies at home and abroad. Recent iterations of its approach to international relations build to some extent on priorities espoused by feminist foreign policy scholars, who call for more emphasis on cooperating to solve global challenges, and less on traditional defence and realpolitik.

As a democratically elected body, the Scottish Government must retain citizen support. Opinion polling on Scottish foreign policy attitudes is rare, and we lack understanding of whether Scottish citizens have foreign policy attitudes that align well with the feminist-influenced perspective of the Scottish Government and whether the positions of those residing in Scotland differ from their English counterparts.

Our analysis of a specialised foreign policy survey commissioned in fall 2022 finds broad support in both Scotland and England for cooperating with other nations, putting provisions to respect gender, human rights, and the environment into trade agreements, and engaging with the world. Intra-Scottish differences along the Unionist-Nationalist divide, particularly on the unilateral use of the military and apologising for the legacy of colonialism are more stark than Scottish-English differences. This suggests that elements of the Scottish Government's "para-diplomacy" policy fall along the fault line around independence that polarises politics in the nation.

“Opinion polling on Scottish foreign policy attitudes is rare…”

Key Findings and Recommendations

1. Aggregate levels of agreement with a variety of Foreign Policy topics ranging from militarism to placing conditions favouring Human, Women’s and Environmental Rights do not differ widely between Scotland and England.

2. Within Scotland, there is polarisation on Foreign Policy topics by respondents’ position on the question of Scottish independence and differences are acute on questions concerning use of the military and Britain’s colonial legacy.

3. Support for Feminist Foreign Policy priorities varies across topics. Among those surveyed, there is high support for more inclusive trade policies, giving greater thought to human and environmental wellbeing in growth strategies and cooperation with other nations. Respondents are more sceptical of feminist ideas concerning demilitarisation and global redistribution of wealth.

4. Support for principles of a Feminist Foreign Policy trends higher among supporters of Scottish independence, suggesting that the adaptation of these principles by the Scottish SNP-led government accords with the opinions of independence minded voters.

Good Global Citizens? Scottish and English attitudes to Foreign Policy

How Scots feel about the Scottish Government's (SG) approach to international affairs and whether their attitudes are distinct from their English counterparts is difficult to judge because most British polling includes small numbers of respondents from Scotland. To overcome this, researchers Dr Claire Duncanson (University of Edinburgh) and Professor Thomas Scotto (University of Glasgow) partnered with SurveyMonkey (assisted by Dr Timothy Gravelle), with funding from the SCGA, to facilitate a specialised foreign policy-focused poll that oversampled Scots. Considering the SG's feminist approach to foreign policy (FaFP), we also wanted to test what attitudes to a FafP might be. With many misunderstandings about FaFP, and indeed feminism, we wanted to avoid asking explicitly what people thought about a feminist approach, or about gender, to mitigate against the risk of answers based on misunderstanding the questions, undermining the validity of the results. This was not a huge hurdle to the research, however, as the questions asked and analyses in Scotto and Gravelle's long standing surveys already enabled us to get at key tenets of a feminist approach. We added some extra questions to aid us to obtain more information on some of the specific things that a Scottish FaFP might include.

Feminist Foreign Policy Theory and Traditional Foreign Policy Survey Questions

Our long-standing survey questions measure topics such as willingness to build and use the military (Militarism), a preference for working through international organisations and building consensus (Multilateralism), withdrawing from global issues (Isolationism), and spending or redistributing funds to help the world's poor (Global Justice). These already-existing questions permit us to explore views about feminism because feminism is not just aimed at achieving gender equality, women's rights, and the participation of women, but is also concerned with challenging the structures that drive gendered inequalities and insecurities, all of which are referenced in these questions. Feminists argue that the root causes of gendered inequalities and insecurities include militarism, a competitive approach to international relations (the opposite of multilateralism), and an economic system that sees wealth accrue to elites, primarily in the global north (the opposite of global justice). We can see, then, that the long-standing questions can already yield results that can tell us something about the levels of enthusiasm Scots and English people might have for feminist approaches.

The survey of 4462 English and 2092 Scottish respondents fielded in October 2022 asked items our previous work shows is reflective of Militarism, another four reflective of Multilateralism, and three reflective of Global Justice. Table 1 lists the question wording and the percentage of respondents agreeing to the statement. The left-hand columns compare Scottish to English respondents while the right-hand columns show intra-Scotland differences based on the respondents' position on Scottish independence.

Table 1a. Militarism Percent Agree					
Statement	England	Scotland	No on Indy.	Yes on Indy.	Undecided on Indy.
The UK needs a strong military to be effective in international relations.	68%	59%*	80%	45%	57%*
The UK should take all steps including the use of force to prevent aggression by any expansionist power.	63%	56%*	67%	51%	49%*
The UK should do what is in its own interest, even if our allies object.	53%	45%*	59%	37%	42%*
The UK doesn't need to withdraw from international affairs, it just needs to stop letting international organizations tell us what we can and can't do.	56%	47%*	62%	39%	40%*
Notes: * next to percentage in last column Indicates $\chi 2$ tests are significant, indicating a different response pattern across groups. Separate tests conducted for English-Scottish and intra-Scottish Differences. Five item response choices range from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Strongly and Somewhat Agree Responses Combined in Table.					

Table 1a, which reports agreement to the militarism questions repeats a pattern that appears across foreign policy topics. Although statistically significant, responses comparing Scottish and English respondents are not vastly different in magnitude. Majorities in both nations favour the need for a strong-military and the use of force. Majorities of English respondents and pluralities of Scottish respondents favour unilateralism or "going it alone" when necessary, given responses to the bottom two statements. When it comes to militarism, we do not see, in the aggregate, strong confluence with feminist scepticism of utilizing force when the need arises.

However, within Scotland, large differences on three of the four questions emerge by respondent positions on the independence question. Unionists in Scotland are far more militaristic than Scottish independence supporters, the latter of which display scepticism toward the need for a strong military and favour a more collaborative

approach. Interestingly, those on the fence on the independence question have a pattern of responses to these questions closer to those favouring independence. Thus, anti-militarism is not a losing proposition for nationalist parties.

In contrast to the questions measuring militarism, results presented in Table 1b show there is clear consensus across all groups, English and Scottish, Unionist and Nationalist, who all endorse all questions concerning the value of diplomacy and working with or considering the views of allies and international organisations. The magnitude of the endorsement within Scotland does, however, show large differences, with those favouring independence being much more favourable towards working with the UN and in their commitment to diplomacy over military force. Scots who are undecided on the independence question fall closer to the Unionists than the Nationalists when it comes to supporting multilateralism, but again all groups are supportive of cooperating with other nations. This accords well with feminist ideas of collaboration over competition.

Table 1b. Multilateralism Percent Agree

Statement	England	Scotland	No on Indy.	Yes on Indy.	Undecided on Indy.
The UK should work more through international organisations, like the UN.	63%	68%*	62%	78%	65%*
The best way for the UK to be a world leader in foreign affairs is to build international consensus.	70%	69%	69%	72%	63%*
The UK should be more committed to diplomacy and not so fast to use the military in international crises.	63%	66%	57%	74%	62%*
In deciding on its foreign policies, the UK should take into account the views of its major allies.	66%	67%	69%	67%	62%*

Notes: * next to percentage in last column Indicates χ^2 tests are significant, indicating a different response pattern across groups. Separate tests conducted for English-Scottish and *intra*-Scottish Differences. Five item response choices range from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Strongly and Somewhat Agree Responses Combined in Table.

Table 1c. Global Justice Percent Agree					
Statement	England	Scotland	No on Indy.	Yes on Indy.	Undecided on Indy.
The UK should spend significantly more money on foreign aid.	30%	31%	20	38%	32%*
The UK should be more willing to share its wealth with other nations, even if it doesn't coincide with our political interests.	31%	33%	23%	41%	34%*
The UK already does enough to help the world's poor.	49%	42%*	57%	33%	38%*
Notes: * next to percentage in last column Indicates χ2 tests are significant, indicating a different response pattern across groups. Separate tests conducted for English-Scottish and intra-Scottish Differences. Five item response choices range from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Strongly and Somewhat Agree Responses Combined in Table.					

The British public shows low levels of agreement with the need to increase foreign aid and global wealth redistribution. Just more than three in ten Scottish and English respondents agree with the first two statements in Table 1c, and near majorities in both countries agree that the UK does enough to help the world's poor. Again, there are within Scotland differences along the nationalist-unionist divide: Scottish Nationalists are significantly more likely than Unionists to agree with the first two statements and much more likely not to agree with the last negatively worded item. Here, those who have not made up their minds about independence are closer in their levels of agreement on the Global Justice Questions to the Nationalists.

The Emerging Agenda from Feminist Foreign Policy Theory and New Survey Items

A feminist approach to foreign policy also tends to involve additional goals, with the broad objective of tackling gendered inequalities and insecurities. Importantly and in accord with feminist thought, these aims blur the boundaries between domestic and foreign policy. The Scottish Government, in its development of a feminist approach, identified its initial three key areas of focus as *"a just transition to net zero, economic justice* and *peace* – each underpinned by human rights and gender equality." It set out to build on several elements of its efforts to be a Good Global Citizen:

- development of a Vision for Trade that includes a commitment to ensuring trade serves gender equality (as well as accords with human rights and environmental concerns); and
- efforts to ensure its international climate justice work recognises that those least responsible for the global climate emergency are being affected first and most severely by it, and that climate finance tackles existing inequalities;
- work toward decolonising international development (to recognise the role of colonialism in driving poverty and insecurity and, as covered by our existing Global Justice questions, to respond by transferring power and wealth to the Global South).

We added new questions to the survey to assess public opinion on some of these policies. The Vision for Trade and some aspects of the need for climate justice are the motivation behind three statements tapping what we call "Trade Justice" (Table 2a). Here, we find high levels of support for incorporating human and women's rights as well as environmental protection into trade agreements, with small levels of variation between England and Scotland. Again, Scottish Nationalists are more supportive than Unionists, but support is widespread for these statements. Levels of enthusiasm among the undecides on independence are closer to those exhibited by Unionists than by Nationalists.

The last set of questions tap feelings about firstly, the UK's colonial legacy and, secondly, the shift away from the belief that economic growth is the *sine qua non* of human advancement. Results presented in Table 2b suggest some strong divides *within* Scotland. The idea that the UK should apologise for colonialism fails to receive majority support in both England and Scotland, and there are strong divides among Unionists and Nationalists within Scotland, with those undecideds on Scottish independence falling in between.

Table 2a. Trade Justice Percent Agree					
Statement	England	Scotland	No on Indy.	Yes on Indy.	Undecided on Indy.
The UK should not sign trade agreements with other countries unless the agreement protects the environment.	69%	71%	62%	78%	72%*
The UK should not sign trade agreements with other countries unless the agreement protects women's rights.	71%	75%*	66%	82%	69%*
The UK should not sign trade agreements with other countries unless the agreement protects human rights.	77%	79%	72%	86%	74%*
Notes: * next to percentage in last column Indicates $\chi 2$ tests are significant, indicating a different response pattern across groups. Separate tests conducted for English-Scottish and intra-Scottish Differences. Five item response choices range from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Strongly and Somewhat Agree Responses Combined in Table.					

Interestingly, in contrast to the lack of support for post-colonial regrets, there is strong support across England and Scotland for rethinking the primacy of economic growth as a goal. Majorities in both nations support prioritizing human wellbeing over growth and do not believe that protecting the environment should be sacrificed on the altar of economic growth. Support within Scotland for alternatives to economic growth is particularly strong among those favouring Scottish independence. While respondents do not endorse feminist positions concerning Britain's colonial legacy, they do favour a rethinking of how we measure progress that moves away from assuming a rise in economic growth tells us very much about the quality of people's lives.

Table 2b. Rethinking Colonialism and Economic and Environmental Wellbeing, Percent Agree					
Statement	England	Scotland	No on Indy.	Yes on Indy.	Undecided on Indy.
The UK needs to apologise for its colonial legacy.	38%	46*	24%	62%	45%*
The UK Government should make human wellbeing its priority, not economic growth.	59%	65%*	49%	78%	57%*
The UK Government should make economic growth its priority, not protecting the environment.	33%	30%*	44%	22%	23%*
Notes: * next to percentage in last column Indicates χ2 tests are significant, indicating a different response pattern across groups. Separate tests conducted for English-Scottish and intra-Scottish Differences. Five item response choices range from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Strongly and Somewhat Agree Responses Combined in Table.					

Conclusion:

The survey of a representative samples of English and Scottish respondents large enough to allow for cross-national and within Scotland comparisons of the publics' foreign policy attitudes we carried out in the fall of 2022 is one we understand to be the first of its kind.

Rather than a focus on the cross-national Scottish-English foreign policy differences, those interested in the SGs approach to paradiplomacy and a feminist approach to foreign policy are advised to pay attention to the significant differences of opinions between Scottish Unionists and Nationalists in the areas of existing and emerging foreign policy ideas. Those favouring Scottish independence show far more support than those who favour the Union when it comes to many of the core tenets espoused by the FaFP-informed agenda adopted by the SG. The para-diplomacy that the SNP-Green Power Sharing Government in Holyrood is developing does speak to many foreign policy preferences of both parties' supporters. However, as is the case with many domestic policy issues in Scotland, many foreign policy issues polarize along the Nationalist-Unionist divide.

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