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## **BRITAIN REMAINS UNITED, BUT WHAT NOW?**

### **SCOTLAND'S REFERENDUM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

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On 18 September 2014, 55.3 per cent of voters in Scotland voted against the country gaining independence from the United Kingdom. Everything indicates that, though the issue has been concluded (for now), the discussion about the political reorganisation of the country has only just begun.

#### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Kingdom of Scotland, or Alba as it is called in Gaelic, originated in the early Middle Ages and formally existed until 1707. By 1603, the Scottish King James VI had been crowned King of England after England's Queen Elizabeth I died without a successor. In 1707, the parliaments and royal houses of both Scotland and England were merged, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain was founded.

Scotland saw its first referendum on 1 March 1979, with a slight majority (51.6 per cent) calling for a parliament of their own. However, due to the low turnout (only 32.9 per cent) the referendum was declared invalid. 18 years later, on 11 September 1997, another referendum was held; this time, an overwhelming majority of 74.3 per cent called for this kind of regional parliament and, in this context, was to receive extensive rights to self-determination on public health policy, education, the environment and domestic security.

Already by the 1960s, the political heart of most Scots tended to beat more towards the left (as opposed to England). The Labour Party was the primary beneficiary of this.

This was reinforced during the tenure of the Thatcher government. The intervention in Iraq under Tony Blair's Labour government increased the growth of the Scottish National Party (SNP), which has explicitly stated since 2007 that its goal is Scottish independence. With the backing of the clear electoral victory in 2011, in which the SNP was able to achieve an absolute majority in the Scottish parliament, Scottish First Minister and SNP Chairman Alex Salmond increased pressure on the government in London. This resulted in him receiving formal approval for a referendum to be held before the end of 2014 by virtue of the Edinburgh Agreement, which was signed by Salmond and British Prime Minister David Cameron on 15 October 2012.

**After the electoral victory in 2011 of the Scottish National Party, Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond increased pressure on the government in London. This resulted in the formal approval for a referendum.**

Disputed at that time was the issue of who was entitled to vote, as well as the questions or options to be put to a vote. Ultimately, they agreed on a yes/no vote on the question, "Should Scotland be an independent country?"; the British side dispensed with the original three options proposed by Salmond ("Yes", "No" and the so-called "Devolution max", i.e. extensive autonomy concessions). This abandonment of the third option was undertaken against the backdrop of the (supposed) certainty that, in any case, a large majority already opposed independence, and these concessions could thus be dispensed with – a misjudgement that would nearly result in the division of the country.

With regard to the right to vote, ambiguity prevailed for a long time. Only in March 2013 was the electoral law amended so that 16 and 17-year-olds could vote. It was also determined that, as with local elections, all those living in Scotland and who are entitled to vote (i.e. Scots, English, Northern Irish and Welsh as well as citizens of EU Member States and the Commonwealth with a residence permit for Scotland) would be entitled to vote in the referendum. By contrast, Scots (even those elsewhere in the UK) residing outside Scotland were excluded from the election. In March 2013, the date was finally set: on 18 September 2014, exactly 700 years after the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 in which Robert the Bruce won Scottish independence from their overpowering English rivals, Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond now wanted to repeat

this historic event in a peaceful and democratic manner through a referendum. For the historically conscious and for those Scots who are proud of their long history, this was certainly an added emotional incentive that Salmond skilfully introduced to his campaign.



A tense relationship: Prime Minister David Cameron (l.) meets the Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond (r.) in 2012 for talks in Edinburgh in order to pave the way for a referendum. | Source: Gordon Terris, Scottish Government, flickr @①②.

## THE CAMPAIGN

In May 2012, supporters of independence with Alex Salmond at the front publicly began their YES campaign. As part of this, in November 2013, they released a 670-page white paper, a detailed blueprint for an independent Scotland.<sup>1</sup> In June 2013, the NO campaign officially began with the slogan “Better Together” under former Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer Alistair Darling. However, this was not visible or really even noticeable until the start of 2014. By the end of 2013, with the backing of almost perfectly consistent polling numbers (with a 60:40 majority against independence), the government in London felt their cause was obviously safe and paid scant attention to the NO campaign. This almost gave the impression that

1 | Cf. The Scottish Government, *Scotland’s referendum on 18 September 2014 is a choice between two futures*, Edinburgh, Nov 2013, <http://scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/11/9348/0> (accessed 30 Sep 2014).

the issue was quite deliberately intended to be dealt with as inconspicuously as possible. It was not until early 2014 when the polling numbers started to shift and the gap between supporters and opponents slowly but surely narrowed that the "Better Together" campaign began to show an increased presence. Given the deep-seated Scottish aversion to the Conservative Party (with only one MP in the whole of Scotland), still stemming from the Thatcher government, the Conservative government in London quite sensibly asked a Labour politician to lead the NO camp.

**Not until the gap between supporters and opponents slowly but surely narrowed the "Better Together" campaign began to show an increased presence.**

While the YES campaign succeeded in conveying a high degree of positive emotionality (and often to the exclusion of rational arguments and factual issues), the "Better Together" campaign attempted to persuade the electorate with rational end economic arguments, though they themselves even turned toward the (albeit negative) emotional side of things by conjuring threatening scenarios in the event of independence, exaggerated to some extent. The Economist aptly commented, "The No campaign is a machine, the Yes campaign is a carnival."<sup>2</sup> The news magazine likewise pointed out that the "Better Together" campaign would end with the referendum due to their core objective, while the YES campaign featured the character of a political movement that would persist even in the event of defeat. In retrospect, this assessment, which was expressed in August, has been found to be only too true.

High points in the run-up to the referendum were two televised debates in August in which Alex Salmond clearly bested the rather wan Alistair Darling, both rhetorically and in terms of the media, although Salmond failed to give clear answers when discussing the British currency. However, Alistair Darling only maintained superiority in that regard (according to the subsequent snap poll, 56 per cent to 44 per cent) until the second debate. With his familiar relaxed and confident demeanour, the Scottish First Minister fielded all factual questions put to him and repeatedly projected the image of a happy and prosperous Scotland, if only it could overcome its English guardianship. He won a decisive victory in this encounter by 71 per cent to 29 per cent.

2 | "Aye'll be back", *The Economist*, 16 Aug 2014, <http://econ.st/1CifH1k> (accessed 30 Sep 2014).



Alex Salmond, First Minister and leader of the nationalists: Due to his strategically clever campaign the referendum remained open for a long time. Immediately after the loss of the YES campaign he announced his resignation. | Source: Ewan McIntosh, flickr ©©©.

An early-September<sup>3</sup> ICM poll provides interesting clues when searching for reasons for the significant increase in approval for the YES campaign from the start of August. Here it became clear that, among supporters of independence, their primary motivation was the disapproval of Westminster's policies (51 per cent), with only 41 per cent motivated by "feelings about Scotland" and 40 per cent by "hopes for a more prosperous future". Among NO voters, however, it was clear that concern for the United Kingdom (53 per cent) – i.e. the actual referendum question – was at the top of the list. Accordingly, the YES campaign and Salmond himself also consistently argued not just by demanding Scotland's independence, but also with critique of the "Westminster Establishment".

Parallels to the campaign by the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in the most recent EU election in May are clear. As part of a European-wide trend, it also won protest votes with its anti-establishment campaign. In this context, announcements by the British government, such as a ten per cent salary increase for Members of the House of Commons in the midst of a rigorous austerity policy and cuts to social benefits, provided additional grist to the mill of the YES campaign. Another bonus point to the YES campaign came in the form of those persons in

3 | See *The Guardian*, 13 Sep 2014.

charge: not only was Alex Salmond the charismatic figure-head, but thanks to his status as a First Minister elected by a large majority, he exuded legitimacy and authority. Because of this, he was far superior to Darling, the former Labour politician installed by London. Celebrities from TV, film and sport also predominantly came down in favour of the YES campaign.<sup>4</sup>

But for all the emotional and physical superiority of the YES campaign (they had a higher degree of visibility, more volunteers and a greater public presence, including in social media), some observers questioned the consequences. The vision of Scottish independence is certainly not the causal result of a campaign and certainly not an invention by Salmond. Rather, it is questionable to what extent the decline in the UK's cohesiveness is and will remain an essential catalyst for the independence debate as well. In this respect, in his editorial in the *Financial Times*,<sup>5</sup> Janan Ganesh correctly observed that, of the four traditional socio-political cohesive forces in the United Kingdom (empire, threats from continental Europe, Protestantism and armed forces), the first two no longer exist and the other two have become much weaker. Yet one might add that it has become evident that the Queen's role as the common head of state and the monarchy as such has previously not only been unquestioned but actually represents an important link for the cohesion of the Kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

Then there are the economic arguments: Scotland has become the most prosperous part of the kingdom (with the exception of London) and this has nourished the belief that the country could "go it alone" or even do better on its own. The fact that the location of the oil reserves in the North

4 | Here we take the example of Sean Connery: "Sean Connery wirbt für Unabhängigkeit Schottlands", *Cicero*, 27 Aug 2014, <http://cicero.de/weltbuehne/schottische-unabhaengigkeit-sean-connery-ermahnt-schotten/58130> (accessed 30 Sep 2014).

5 | Janan Ganesh, "A bad campaign is not the real unionist problem for Scotland", *Financial Times*, 8 Sep 2014, <http://on.ft.com/1vzvLOH> (accessed 30 Sep 2014).

6 | The Queen last expressed her opinion on the matter on the occasion of her Silver Jubilee in 1977 by pointing out that many Scottish kings and queens numbered amongst her ancestors, but that she had been crowned the Queen of the United Kingdom and that the welfare of all her subjects was thus equally important.

Sea lies mostly in Scottish waters (90 per cent) contributes significantly to this assessment. Often excluded from this argument, however, is the fact that a sizeable part of this wealth has come into being through subsidies from the government in London, regardless of political persuasion.

**14 days prior to the referendum, the polls showed a leaning towards independence, the Scottish flag was raised over Downing Street and Cameron appealed to the Scottish people.**

However, 14 days prior to the referendum, an updated YouGov poll plunged Cameron's government into a panic and sparked a sense of euphoria in Salmond's camp. While the polling numbers still placed opposition to independence ahead in early August by 61 to 39 per cent, on September 8 the numbers suggested otherwise for the first time. For the first time the independence movement was ahead by 51 to 49 per cent. The relatively emotional *Financial Times* headline read "Pro Union Campaign in chaos".<sup>7</sup> Finally shaken, the British government now responded: the Scottish flag was raised over Downing Street and the Prime Minister appealed to the Scottish people, practically pleadingly.<sup>8</sup> In terms of those representing the campaign, there was a last-minute reshuffle: former Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown (a Scot himself) replaced the hapless Alistair Darling.<sup>9</sup> That was a clear sign that the political parties in London were now doing all they could to band together to fight for Scotland to remain in the Union. The otherwise stolid Brown actually succeeded in breathing life into the hitherto bloodless "Better Together" campaign; Cameron joined in with his emotional plea ("It would break my heart if Scotland leaves").

Even the news of a new pregnancy in the British royal family became an object of the Scotland debate. It was speculated that the early announcement was deliberately released to provide royalist Scots with an emotional reason

7 | George Parker, Mure Dickie and Alistair Gray, "Pro-union camp 'in chaos' as poll puts nationalists ahead", *Financial Times*, 7 Sep 2014, <http://on.ft.com/1rS2waI> (accessed 30 Sep 2014).

8 | Peter Dominiczak, Peter Spence and Simon Johnson, "Stay with us: David Cameron's desperate plea to Scots", *The Telegraph*, 9 Sep 2014, <http://telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/scottish-independence/11086060/Scots.html> (accessed 30 Sep 2014).

9 | Cf. Jochen Buchsteiner, "Der unwahrscheinliche Retter", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 11 Sep 2014, <http://faz.net/-i27-7tqh1> (accessed 30 Sep 2014).

to remain in the UK. But Salmond once again proved his cleverness here: he congratulated the heirs to the throne, but did so by addressing them as the Earl and Countess of Strathearn, one of their Scottish titles, and not simply as the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, as is more common. The Queen herself publicly held back, as expected, up to the day of the referendum, only briefly commenting after attending church on the Sunday before the referendum that the referendum was close to her heart,<sup>10</sup> although it had never been called into question that an independent Scotland would want to retain the Queen as head of state.



Plea for unity: If Scotland would secede from the United Kingdom, it would break his heart, Prime Minister Cameron said. | Source: © Arron Hoare, MoD/Crown.

As a final act, David Cameron ultimately called off the traditional Prime Minister's Question Time in Parliament in order to travel to Scotland with party leaders Ed Miliband (Labour) and Nick Clegg (Liberal Democrats) to make an appeal for Scotland remaining in the UK.<sup>11</sup> Together they promised far-reaching concessions to Scotland if Scots voted against independence. In doing so, they essentially returned to

10 | Literally, she said, "I hope the Scottish people will think very carefully about the future." Quoted in Nicholas Watt and Severin Carrell, "Queen hopes Scottish independence voters will 'think carefully about future'", *The Guardian*, 14 Sep 2014, <http://gu.com/p/4xhe5> (accessed 30 Sep 2014).

11 | See also: "Last Minute Reise", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 10 Sep 2014.



Salmond's original de facto request for "devolution max", which they had categorically rejected a year before – a win for Salmond even before the referendum.

## THE EXIT SCENARIO

British and international media outlets commented on and analysed every possible consequence<sup>12</sup> of a possible victory for independence proponents in the days leading up to the referendum, both for Britain (including the question of a royal head of state, redesigning the flag and the formal designation of the "rest of the United Kingdom" [rUK]) and for Europe (impact on other independence movements, Scotland's membership in the EU, effects on the possible EU referendum in Great Britain in 2017). The United Kingdom

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would lose 8.33 per cent of its population and 10.3 per cent of its economic output, to name just a few figures. The British currency and numerous entrepreneurs and investors appeared nervous: the British Pound lost six per cent of its value in the weeks before the referendum, and numerous public statements were made indicating that companies would relocate. It has also been speculated in banking circles that Scotland's exit would make Britain's exit from the EU in the event of a possible referendum in 2017 more likely because of the negative consequences the financial hub in London would face in the event of Scottish independence. The oil reserves cited by the Scottish government as the cornerstone of Scottish economic independence have been scrutinised critically with regards to the sustainability of the reserves and price fluctuations. With the polls narrowing, repeated mention was made of the 1995 Quebec referendum, in which secession from Canada was prevented by only a razor-thin margin of 50.6 to 49.4 per cent. One banker struck at the heart of the generally increasing uncertainty and perplexity by saying, "Over the last two weeks we have come to terms with the unbelievable becoming the possible."<sup>13</sup>

12 | "Der Schotten-Schock", *Handelsblatt*, 9 Sep 2014; "Wetten auf den Ölschatz", *Handelsblatt*, 9 Sep 2014; Peter Rásonyi, "Schottlands Schatten über Londons City", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 9 Sep 2014, <http://nzz.ch/wirtschaft/1.18379736> (accessed 30 Sep 2014).

13 | Cited from Jonathan Guthrie, "Eckxit could trigger Brexit and disaster for City", *Financial Times*, 17 Sep 2014, <http://on.ft.com/ZzvEc0> (accessed 30 Sep 2014).



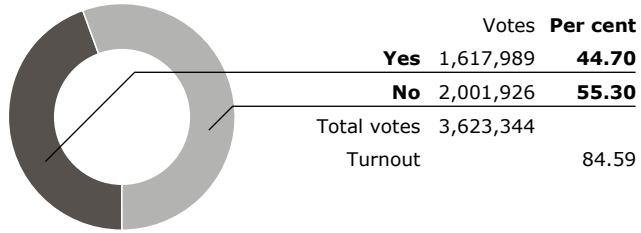
Disputed natural reserves: Scotland is known for its off-shore natural gas and oil resources. A considerable part of the revenues is sent to London. Therefore, the YES campaign expressed the aim to manage the economy independently. | Source: Steven Straiton, flickr ©.

## **OUTCOME AND ASSESSMENT**

After the polls closed on 18 September at 22:00, the tension was palpable and most likely everyone in the country, and many people in Europe were aware of the significance of this decision. But it became clear relatively quickly in the early morning hours that the NO camp would win by a greater margin than expected. With a voter turnout of 84.5 per cent, the end result with all 32 electoral districts reporting was: 2,001,926 votes for NO (55.3 per cent) and 1,617,989 for YES (44.7 per cent). Only four electoral districts (West Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire, Dundee and Glasgow) posted victories for independence supporters.

Fig. 1

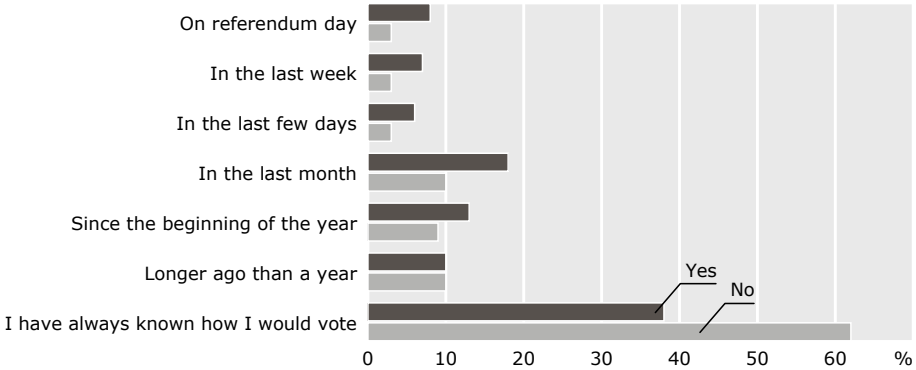
**Should Scotland be an independent country?**



Source: "Scotland Decides", *BBC News*, <http://bbc.com/news/events/scotland-decides/results> (accessed 8 Oct 2014).

Fig. 2

**Moment of voting decision**



Source: Figure modified according to n. 14.

Alex Salmond conceded defeat equally early. It is interesting to note here that, according to one poll, at least 72 per cent of voters had made their decision more than a year ago, with only nine per cent deciding less than a year ago.<sup>14</sup> This figure also called into question the real impact of the campaigns. In addition, the final outcome was a setback for the polling institutes themselves as nearly all of them had predicted a narrower margin in the results and had now been proved wrong. One can only speculate about the factors that tipped the scales for such a clear outcome. The uncertainty with respect to currency, the labour market and EU membership may have likewise played a significant

14 | Cf. "Scottish independence: poll reveals who voted, how and why", *The Guardian*, 20 Sep 2014, <http://gu.com/p/4xmd2> (accessed 30 Sep 2014).

role in addition to the certainty that self-determination had already been achieved prior to the referendum through far-reaching political concessions without the country having to take the risk of striking out on its own.

The result was clear in two ways: 55 per cent of voters explicitly addressed the question of Scottish independence by voting to remain in the United Kingdom. Yet at the same time, the 45 per cent of supporters of independence (including the protest votes against the parties and politics of Westminster included therein) send a message that is more than clear, as had already been evidenced in the most recent European elections. In fact, this has resulted in a series of questions and challenges for Scotland and Britain, but also for Europe and these must be addressed seriously and forcefully. For all the relief in the "Better Together" camp (and probably most of the UK and Europe), it would be a serious misjudgement to continue with business as usual and as a lost opportunity to draw lessons from the referendum.

**The 45 per cent of supporters of independence send a message that is more than clear, as had already been evidenced in the most recent European elections.**

In Scotland, the focus is now on de-escalating the highly emotionally charged atmosphere and calming the conflicts that came to light. The return to the peaceful coexistence of Scots is an urgent matter for families, organisations, politics and society. Alex Salmond himself retired immediately following the political consequences of the election and announced his resignation as First Minister and leader of the SNP. Upon his departure, he strongly warned against ignoring the 1.6 million votes of his supporters or sacrificing them out of tactical political considerations within the framework of the debate on federalism. A prominent and dedicated successor is poised to take over in the form of previous Deputy Prime Minister Nicola Sturgeon, who took on an increasingly active and visible role during the campaign, and she will insist on compliance with the promises made in the last days leading up to the referendum. The three main parties in Scotland would now be headed by women (another contrast to the political gender reality in London): along with Nicola Sturgeon at the head of the SNP, Ruth Davidson leads the Conservatives and Johann Lamont the Labour Party.

**The Scots have their own government, their own flag, as well as rugby and football teams, they control their legal, education and health policies.** The debate on autonomy, self-determination and independence that has been maintained since the founding of the Scottish parliament must also be assessed rationally,

even in Scotland. The Scots have their own government, their own flag, as well as rugby and football teams, they control their legal, education and health policies; they have removed tuition fees and largely control their health service (National Health Service). Even nationalism sometimes bears strange fruits, as when “without batting an eye, Scottish nationalists hold the Tories responsible for Glasgow’s slums, even after 15 years of self-governance and even if they themselves live in thriving satellite cities surrounding Edinburgh, whose prosperity is based on Thatcher’s dismantling of obsolete industrial structures.”<sup>15</sup>

For its part, the British government must now quickly present a concrete proposal for negotiation. As quickly as the parties agreed to make concessions to Scotland, just as varied are their proposals in detail (amount of personal and corporate income tax rates, social security, health care system, etc.). David Cameron has already entrusted Lord Smith of Calvin with the preparation of this proposal, which will be submitted by the end of November and will then be presented for a vote in Parliament as the “Scotland Act” on 25 January 2015 (Burns Night). It is unlikely that the current Parliament will adopt the corresponding legislation before the elections in 2015. The hastily crafted consensus of the parties before the referendum is on the verge of disintegrating in the face of questions of detail and the apparent power dispute.

One condition of the Scottish concessions is clarification of the West Lothian question,<sup>16</sup> which both the Scots and large sections of the Labour Party reject. The implicit political power game can be explained by looking at the distribution of seats: an overwhelming majority of the 59 Scottish MPs in the lower house belong to the Labour Party (40), with the Liberal Democrats holding eleven seats, the SNP

15 | Matthias Thibaut, “Die Fliehkräfte bleiben”, *Handelsblatt*, 22 Sep 2014.

16 | “English votes for English laws”, i.e. restricting voting rights to English MPs in the House of Commons on the matter of laws that affect only England, or even the establishment of an English parliament with an English First Minister.

six and the ruling Conservatives one; one Scottish member of the House of Commons is independent. The Scottish influence on the Labour faction is thus significantly higher (about 15 per cent) than it is with the Tories (one out of 304 MPs). The discussion and linking of the West Lothian question is a much more important issue for the Tories than it is for Labour, which would have lost a substantial portion of its MPs in the event of Scottish independence and thus the prospect of any parliamentary majorities. The outcome of the referendum not only marks the beginning of a constitutional debate, but also the campaign for the general election in 2015.

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This result of the referendum was a personal achievement for Prime Minister David Cameron. A victory for the YES campaign would have called his authority into question and would have sparked more than just one leadership debate within the Conservative Party in the run-up to the Conservative Party Conference at the end of September and the elections in May 2015. He proved once again that he possesses political reflexes under pressure (which he has no doubt faced and as he has admitted with regard to his health), which have helped him out of hardship time and again. When he was first to address the press at 7 a.m. on 19 September, he adopted the right tone by expressing his joy and relief that he continues to live in a United Kingdom on the one hand, but indicating that he understands that the concerns and wishes of the 45 per cent YES votes should be taken seriously and that this result would have consequences not only for Scotland, but also for Wales, Northern Ireland and England. This enabled him to push the opposition onto the defensive with his call for a solution to the West Lothian question. This was particularly important immediately prior to the Labour Party Conference. It was evident that Labour was not prepared for Cameron's statements and that the party is divided internally.

Furthermore, the British Prime Minister succeeded in taking the wind out of Nigel Farage and UKIP's sails, at least in the short term, and was able to win over his most dangerous opponents within his own party (the so-called backbenchers), who mostly come from ultra-conservative Southern England. This was important for the following

reason: Cameron is under pressure from the defection of Tory MP Douglas Carswell to UKIP and the resulting need for a by-election in early October; this could be the first time UKIP wins a seat in Parliament. Add to this the announcement of his most significant party rival, London Mayor Boris Johnson, that he would run for a seat in the lower house, underscoring his ambitions to become Prime Minister himself. But Cameron's tactics cannot disguise the fact that his government has long misinterpreted the Scotland question and well and truly misjudged it with its reluctance.<sup>17</sup> One can only hope that he has gained some knowledge from the experience, particularly as regards the possible EU referendum.

For Britain, this result means that the country must face the fundamental questions that have smouldered for a long time and have come to light through the referendum. Although a territorial fragmentation was averted, it

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opened up the question of Britain's national identity, and thus the question of what holds the kingdom together aside from its existing symbols, common history and the royal family, which will require discussion and a process of clarification that will be both lengthy and complex. Janan Ganesh struck at the heart of the matter when he said, "The UK has survived, comfortably; the UK in its present design is dead."<sup>18</sup> "Trying to hold together through the emancipation of its parts"<sup>19</sup> is without doubt a fallacy that will be of no avail. In addition, it has become clear that a debate on the territorial structure and the internal political order of the country has been set in motion.

With the concessions now being offered to Scotland, legitimate claims have arisen from Wales, Northern Ireland and England in particular, which can only be solved within the framework of whatever kind of federal reorganisation is settled upon. This requires a serious constitutional debate, including the question of the meaning and purpose of existing institutions, such as the House of Lords. Snapshots

17 | See also Bjoern Finke, "Cameron, der Zocker", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 22 Sep 2014.

18 | Janan Ganesh, "The union lives on – but in its present design it may well be dead", *Financial Times*, 19 Sep 2014, <http://on.ft.com/YW2qTC> (accessed 30 Sep 2014).

19 | Matthias Thibault, *Handelsblatt*, 22 Sep 2014.

staged for the media are unsuitable for this because their transparent tactical deliberations will only lead to greater political disenchantment in the country. Well-intentioned references to other federal regimes, such as Germany, are only suitable for the debate in the UK to a limited extent given the differences in history and mentality. The discussions that have now been set in motion will have an enormous impact. Eight months before a general election with an uncertain outcome, in a political landscape that is already on edge due to the rise of the right-wing populist party UKIP, this debate is rather explosive in nature. It is anything but helpful that two ailing and internally divided political parties lay at the center, with each also engaging in (differently focused) leadership debates and each having different territorial preferences (Labour: Scotland, Tories: England).



After the referendum it is important to de-escalate the highly emotionally charged atmosphere and to calm conflicts. To strengthen the coexistence of Scots is the task of families, politics and society. | Source: Gerard Ferry, flickr ©@@.

This result also has far-reaching impacts for the European Union. On one hand, it managed to defer the uncertainty associated with Scottish independence (there were, for example, more than divergent statements and positions on the extent to which and the speed at which Scotland could become a member of the EU after independence). On the other hand, independence would surely have lent credence to other independence movements in Europe (Catalonia, Basque Country, Veneto, Flanders). Nevertheless, 45 per



cent of the losing YES campaign could motivate these regions and, as such, the discussion of internal fragmentation within the EU has certainly not been silenced.

**Edinburgh's accusations of paternalism by London bear a striking resemblance to the reproaches London has levelled against Brussels.**

As for the possible EU referendum in Britain (2017), Scotland's independence would have presumably increased the likelihood of EU rejection by the rest of the UK through increased nationalistic tendencies. But the problem has neither been solved by the debate on federalism that has now been triggered, nor by the calls for a greater degree of self-determination for the more EU-critical England. Rather the knowledge gained from the referendum campaign has imposed a (no doubt necessary) campaign for the possible EU referendum. Edinburgh's accusations of paternalism by London bear a striking resemblance to the accusations London has levelled against Brussels. An EU campaign faces the same challenge of avoiding a negative and threatening campaign (in the event of an exit from the EU) and instead launching an emotional plea for Britain to remain in the EU.

The Scotland campaign has also demonstrated that though cross-party consensus is good but not sufficient, that disenchantment with politics can be mobilised in an anti-establishment campaign and can be successful. Salmond used these factors to his advantage in 2014. Nigel Farage will surely want to exploit this as early as 2015 and then again, given the right circumstances in 2017 for himself. The ultimate question of which personalities can and want to move this EU debate into the foreground will remain an exciting one. Nationality and place of birth and even kilts may have had a positive effect in Scotland, but it is hard to imagine how this would be implemented in a European campaign; equally hard to imagine is where the credible and compelling pro-EU voices will come from in the UK.

Timothy Garton Ash, a professor at Oxford University, argues for a future that includes a federal Britain in a confederal Europe.<sup>20</sup> This requires a serious constitutional

20 | Cf. Timothy Garton Ash, "Let's not fear the F-word or the C-word: we should move to a federal Britain in a confederal Europe", *The Guardian*, 21 Sep 2014, <http://gu.com/p/4xmt7> (accessed 30 Sep 2014).

debate on the reorganisation of the country, including its integration in Europe. "How on earth can we talk about a federal settlement for Britain without discussing the powers that belong to Europe?" demands Garton Ash further.

The outcome of the Scottish referendum contains a clear warning to Europe. The anything but miniscule approval rates for independence were simultaneously an expression of a desire for the country's own identity and self-determination, and the rejection of paternalism, heteronomy and political disenchantment with an overly autocratic and out-of-touch political elite. These are elements that apply not only to the relationship between Edinburgh and London, but also to the relationships between Member States and the EU in Brussels. The results of the recent European Parliament elections themselves already presented a clear warning. Now, the referendum in Scotland has echoed this warning and the vote should not be discounted as a purely domestic matter for Britain. Scotland has voted, and has ultimately voted not only from the gut, but the heart and mind as well. For the UK, this represents an opportunity and a challenge to experience that "together" is in fact "better". It remains to be seen (and hoped) that this realisation holds sway on the issue of EU membership as well.