Scotland alone?
Awaiting the independence referendum

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History on the doorstep

Less than four months remain before the future of Scotland is decided. The referendum on 18 September will conclude years of debate on what Scotland could and should become. That discussion is however unlikely to end with the referendum result. Should the outcome be a “Yes”, negotiations will ensue on how to parcel up the institutions, arrangements, properties and debt that pertain to the UK as a whole today. In the case of a “No”, the further process will concern how devolution could be further developed to acknowledge the political differences between England and Scotland. In particular, the fiscal gap between left-leaning Scots and right-leaning English will have to be addressed, possibly through enhanced devolution of taxation in Scotland.

A vast democratic exercise, the referendum is also by its very nature a contested one. The precise wording on the ballot paper, finally agreed by the Electoral Commission; extending the right to vote to 16-year-olds; accepting English and Welsh voters residing in Scotland but rejecting the near-800,000 Scots with an English address; all these decisions have been contested underway. But the exchanges between London and Edinburgh have been civil if not cordial, in itself an example that democratic procedures prevail here, in striking contrast to attempts at secession in other parts of the world.

The present issue of British Politics Review has cast the net widely to approach a number of the issues at stake on the day of the referendum. There are issues which are not fully analysed here – such as the currency question and Scotland’s future relationship with the EU. The many perspectives that are relevant to the Scotland debate merely reflects the complexity of two historic nations on the threshold of parting company, 307 years into the parliamentary union which sealed their partnership.

Yet topics that are addressed in the Review are of the sort observers from the outside should take particular notice of. Like Malcolm Harvey’s discussion on what kind of economic and social model Scotland would be likely to pursue, or Eve Hepburn’s analysis of immigration policy, one of the points of divergence between London and Edinburgh that is rarely caught by the flood of commentaries and news articles on the Scotland of 2014, and after:

What comes after 18 September is yet to say, but on the backdrop of the selected articles below, the interested reader will hopefully be better positioned to consider the choice that Scotland will make.

Oivind Bratberg and Atle L. Wold (editors)

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Nations and states rise and fall. And even disappear. Union states too split asunder. The most spectacular recent example is the Soviet Union, seemingly impregnable during the Cold War but after 1991, dismembered and reduced – for a time - to its core. This September Scotland's voters will decide the future of the historic parliamentary union that has held Scotland and England together for over three centuries.

Subsequent to the launch of the present referendum process there has been surprisingly little appeal to history. No longer are nationalist politicians making the claim that Scotland was bullied into union with England in 1707. The allegation that the Scots had been 'bought and sold for English gold' is still heard, but more often behind closed doors. Neither is the independence vote in September being presented as the opportunity for Scots to regain their country's long-lost freedom after three centuries of English hegemony. Rather, the thrust of the Scottish Government's manifesto – Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland (2013) - is effective government. Its 561 pages look forward rather than back. Reference is made to the 'ancient nation' of Scotland, but the journey to independence is dated from 1999, when the devolved Scottish Parliament was established in Edinburgh, not 1707, when the union was inaugurated.

Few would dispute that until relatively recently Scotland has benefited enormously from being part of the British state. But if the union is to survive, Scots will have to be assured that there will be more government of Scotland by Scots in Scotland. During the union era it is when the Scottish dimension has been ignored by Westminster that demands for reform of challenges to the British union state have arisen. But most of the time, most Scots have been relatively content with their constitutional situation and the dual identity of being Scottish and British too. They relished the security, opportunities, wealth, and respect internationally that their contribution to Britain's imperial project brought. Now however the union is seen as a hindrance to Scottish development, and Conservative-Liberal-dominated Westminster as representative of values alien to most Scots - who feel much more Scottish than British.

An historical dimension is clearly helpful in understanding the current situation. History highlights the similarities between 1706-7, and today. But there were differences too. And lessons can be drawn.

Scots in 1705 and 1706 were swamped with paper: a veritable pamphlet war. The same is true now, although the bombardment is even more intense. Newspapers and the broadcast media carry referendum-focussed stories, speeches, discussion and debates on a daily basis. Websites proliferate and social media ensures that within seconds a controversial comment on anything referendum-related can go national – and even global. But the challenge is to distinguish propaganda from informed comment based on hard evidence.

By the summer of 1706 the principles and broad terms of the proposed union – which had been agreed by senior English and Scottish politicians earlier that year – were publicly known. Details were known of what taxes were to be paid, how much revenue Scotland would be expected to raise, and what compensation the Scots were to receive for taking on a share of England's national debt. Scots today have only the Scottish Government's assertions about what would happen post-independence, and counter opinions from the UK government, supplemented by the views of academics, think tanks, companies and interest groups. But little has been agreed with Westminster and other agencies, even on fundamental matters such as Scotland's currency post-independence, the role of the Bank of England, Scotland's share of UK debt, membership of the Commonwealth, the EU and NATO.
Thus on critical issues Scots are in the dark about what independence will mean in practice. Undecided voters find this frustrating. Survey evidence shows that a large segment of the electorate is unhappy about the quality of the information being made available, and its biased nature.

Packed public meetings however reflect intense interest in the constitutional question. Although the decision to join with England in a parliamentary union in 1707 was taken by members of the Scottish and English parliaments who were there by right or returned by tiny electorates, ordinary Scots thought about, discussed and attempted to influence the country’s 200-plus commissioners (the equivalent of today’s Members of the Scottish Parliament). Petitions showered into Edinburgh’s Parliament House.

As a consequence parts of the treaty were amended. Indeed as this happened and also as a separate Act was passed to secure the Church of Scotland post-Union (thereby pacifying Presbyterian concerns that Scots would be required to worship under Anglican church of England, with its bishops and ‘Romish’ practices), opposition outside Parliament reduced. But on some issues it was the threat of popular protest that induced action. Concern grew that the symbols of Scotland’s independent nationhood – the crown, sceptre and sword of state as well as the country’s official records, the nation’s memory - were to be moved to London. Consequently, added to the 24th of the 25 articles of union was a clause promising the items in question would stay in Scotland. For over three hundred years they have.

This underlines how powerful was the Scots’ sense of a nation unconquered – other than briefly by Oliver Cromwell half a century earlier. Scots at all levels of society were to varying degrees patriotic. Appeals were made by opponents of union to the memory of medieval warriors Robert the Bruce and William Wallace – as they are now by those favouring independence. Indeed much is being made of the fact that June 2014 is the 700th anniversary of the battle of Bannockburn when under Bruce the Scots famously defeated England’s invading army. In 1706, echoing the periodically revived Scots’ Declaration of Arbroath of 1320, the 1st duke of Atholl declared in Parliament that as long as there were 100 Scots alive ‘we will not enter into a treaty so dishonurable’ as this one. Towards England attitudes were mixed, ranging from outright and ugly xenophobia to irritation even on the part of pro-Unionists who felt they were treated as second-class citizens, and patronised. On the periphery today, there remains an ugly anti-English streak.

Passions ran high in the early eighteenth century. They still do. Then as now public opinion was sharply divided. The main political groupings worked assiduously to harness public opinion in support of their respective positions. The opposition or Country party was most effective in this regard. This makes it difficult to be certain what the population at large actually felt about the proposed union. Many were unsure. Currently almost 20 per cent of the electorate are ‘don’t knows’. With support for independence still narrowly behind in the polls (but catching up), it is the undecided voters who will decide Scotland’s future. In 1707 it seems that most people would have supported a variant of the then existing constitutional arrangement whereby Scotland and England were ruled jointly by the same monarch – the regal union created when Scotland’s James VI had succeeded as James 1st of England in 1603. Key was the retention of Scotland’s Parliament, with limitations on the power of the monarch of the two kingdoms. Given the degree of popular support there is now for the monarchy (apart from republicans in the SNP and Scottish socialists) and the Scottish Parliament – with additional powers, an interesting question arises:

"If today’s unionists are to carry hearts as well as doubting minds – and win the referendum in September - a more positive case for a British union for the twenty-first century needs to be made."
In a world where access to empire was a condition of prosperity, Scotland’s best hope lay with England which had colonial markets the Scots could benefit from in America and the Caribbean, and the naval power needed to protect Scottish merchant shipping on the high seas. This – admission to England’s protected trading ring - was a major gain. Hence the article of union that created a free trade environment for Scotland’s enterprising merchants was supported in Parliament even by those MPs who were against the rest of the proposals. The Scots were pragmatists. They still are.

As a mature rather than an under-developed economy Scotland is now in a profoundly different position than in 1707. Even so it is on the prospects for businesses as well as individuals that attention is most closely focussed – and upon which, ultimately the referendum will be decided. Even at this late stage in the debate however there is little agreement about how an independent Scotland would fare economically, with vastly different assumptions being made by the competing parties – for example - about the medium- and long-term value to Scotland of its oil revenues.

Much water has flown under the Tweed since 1707. The nature of Scotland’s relationship with England has evolved and is now in many respects vastly different from what was originally conceived.

From the English perspective union in 1707 was the unintended consequence of Scotland’s growing feistiness. The Scots had been determined to follow their own foreign policy, and had dug their heels in against the proposal – enshrined in England's 1701 Act of Succession – that on her death Queen Anne should be succeeded by a Protestant from the House of Hanover; a measure designed to deny the Jacobites (supporters of James VII and II, who had been forced off the throne at the time of the Revolution of 1688) any chance of being restored. For Anne (who favoured union) and Britain’s Protestants the prospect of the return of a Catholic Stuart, supported by their much-feared enemy and threat to British security, France under Louis XIV with his aspirations to universal monarchy, was anathema. By 1705 some English ministers had lost patience with the Scots – and their awkward Parliament – and put on the table their demand for an incorporating union.

In this sense the 1707 union was ‘made in England’ - and unwanted, above all by the Jacobites for whom it meant, in theory, perpetual exclusion. Astutely, they grasped the popular nationalist flag, and spearheaded opposition to union. Also against were Scotland’s fundamentalist Presbyterians who regarded union with Anglican England as sinful, preferring a future in which they might be materially poor - but spiritually pure. But there were patriotic Scots – mainly Presbyterian Whigs - who sought closer union to defend the gains of the Revolution (constitutional monarchy and religious and civil liberties) against France and the Jacobites. Whigs too were inclined to see in union a route to national prosperity. Amongst their number were those who believed that continued Scottish-English rivalry was damaging for both nations. As inhabitants of the same island who, by and large understood the same language and found succour in the Protestant religion, union made sense.

But this was then. Contested it may have been but Scotland's Whigs’ vision was sufficiently compelling that in Parliament they were able to carry the day – reinforced by political management. Outside there was little enthusiasm, but opposition was partly dispelled by the amendments made to the articles but also as the Scots negotiators had managed to secure the ‘fundamentals’ of Scottish civic society. In reality the 1707 union was never ‘entire’.

But it was a union for the eighteenth century, forged at a time when, across Europe great states were being created.

In this respect, times have changed. If today’s unionists are to carry hearts as well as doubting minds – and win the referendum in September - a more positive case for a British union for the twenty-first century needs to be made.
The political economy of Scotland

By Malcolm Harvey

When Scotland goes to the polls in September to answer the apparently simple question of whether or not it should be an independent country, the answer from the electorate will signify the end of one era in Scottish politics and the beginning of another. No matter the outcome – whether Scotland votes for independence or to remain in the Union – more questions will inevitably arise. If the latter, questions surrounding the prospect of more powers for the Scottish Parliament, the role of devolution and, indeed, the Scottish Parliament, the role of the prospect with which this article is concerned, then the list of questions is seemingly endless. The concern of this piece is political economy – namely, how Scotland might organise internally in the event of independence. Political economy in this sense reflects Scotland’s social model, involving welfare policies, public services and taxation, as well as relations between state and civil society. To the extent that these elements add up to a social model, there are several options.

One (which has generated some traction in Scotland through the work of, among others, Nordic Horizons, the Jimmy Reid Foundation and the Electoral Reform Society) is the social investment model, and, in particular, the social democratic variant so dominant in the Nordic states. In these states, high public expenditure is sustained by high taxes. In most cases, there is an emphasis on high levels of employment, with strong incentives for every individual capable of work to enter the labour market. Overall, the active labour market policy is geared towards productivity but also aimed at building social solidarity, social integration and stability. Education plays a role in social investment as a mechanism for integration and social mobility, as well as improving the quality of the labour force. So too does childcare, allowing mothers in particular to re-enter the labour force, further increasing the tax base for income taxation. In the Nordic cases, a commitment to universalism has played a role in maintaining the social solidarity required to sustain the model. Small wage differences also commit business to innovate and heighten productivity rather than competing in the low skills/low wages segment of international markets. A tripartite bargaining system involving employers’ associations, trade unions and the respective governments has helped to foster trust between these bodies and led to outcomes beneficial to each: wage restraint, increased employment and generous welfare provision the result.

A second option is what has been termed the ‘market competition’ model and focuses more on adapting to global market conditions. Low personal and business taxation and light regulation, small government and limited state bureaucracy are the main features, with the objective of promoting enterprise, inward investment and global competitiveness. The labour market is permitted to operate freely, in shelter from state regulation as well as from the bargaining system emphasised by the social investment model. Flexibility and competition are guiding principles for the political economy, and the social model slimmed down to basic services. Monetary and fiscal policy is generally moderated, either by currency union or by pegging, limiting the state’s ability to innovate in this area. The Baltic states are examples of the model, with low taxation one driver for investment and economic growth over the past decade, contrasted with substantial negative growth in the wake of the global financial crisis (though rapid recoveries thereafter). Generally, these states are marked by high levels of inequality and have limited welfare systems.

These options are, of course, Weberian ideal-types, and none of the states given as examples above conform fully to the models. But which path is Scotland likely to follow should September’s vote affirm independence?

There have been, and continue to be, proponents of a market competition model in Scotland. The current Cabinet Secretary for Education Michael Russell co-authored a book (admittedly, while he was out of parliament) promoting these principles, though upon his return to office he has conformed more with the prevailing social democratic thinking within the Scottish National Party (SNP). It is not difficult to see why: public opinion in Scotland (as evidenced by continued support for the SNP and Labour; and the electoral weakness of the Conservative party) gravitates towards the centre-left. This has delivered much in the way of social democratic policy since the restoration of a Scottish Parliament in 1999 including (universal) free prescription charges, free university tuition, and free bus passes and personal care for the elderly. There is thus broad support for (and historical institutional development of) a welfare system in Scotland, and it is difficult to see this being substantially deconstructed with independence. Thus, the market competition route appears unlikely.
Several campaign groups, as noted above, support the social investment model in Scotland, and the extension thereof, to resemble the Nordic social democratic welfare systems. In particular, focus has been given as to how these states achieve more egalitarian outcomes, with calls for increased childcare provision, a more progressive system of taxation, the establishment of active labour market policies to assist the unemployed and, above all, universalism in public services. Indeed, the Scottish Government’s (2013) White Paper on independence (optimistically on their part entitled ‘Scotland’s Future’) itself proposes an expansion of childcare; continuation of pensions and welfare payments at a level commensurate with current UK-level spending; and a National Convention of Employment and Labour Relations, formalising links with business and unions and encouragement of union representation. So, within government, social investment thinking carries some weight.

But can the social investment model grow and prosper? One of the issues that devolution has created is that it provides the Scottish Parliament with powers to spend the Scottish budget in areas including health and education, but does not give it responsibilities over raising this revenue. This has created an imbalance in the Scottish political psyche which, again, is reflected in the White Paper. For while the spending commitments (some of which are outlined above) are plentiful, there is little comment on the revenue side of the ledger. There are proposals to cut corporation tax (ostensibly to increase inward investment, thereby increasing the tax take in the long run), and to abolish air passenger duty (with similar intended outcomes). Indeed, the argument for expanding childcare is that it will pay for itself through increased female participation in the work force, ignoring the requirement for a substantial capital outlay (in terms of building nurseries and training teachers) required prior to any return.

Thus, the evidence, at least in the Scottish Government’s White Paper, suggests that Scottish independence Labour-supporting) electorate in the central belt. The Scottish population are generally amenable to the idea of generous and universal public services (as the abolition of university tuition and prescription charges has shown) but would be resistant to any attempt to increase taxation in order to extend public services further. Such an increase in taxation – if evidence from the Nordic states is examined – might be acceptable in circumstances whereby social solidarity was high. In Scotland however, trade unions are smaller and have little experience of an institutional role in wage bargaining. As such, the prospect for building such solidarity appears limited.

If a social investment model proves desirable, it is possible that independence itself could provide the shock that would shift old practices and attitudes. What it currently lacks in institutional capacity (in terms of wage bargaining and government-business relations) would need to be developed prior to any instigation of Nordic-style tax-and-spend policies. However, with independence, the major source of friction between the SNP and Labour would be resolved (though personal animosities would likely remain) and Scotland could worry less about nationality and the constitutional arrangement which would allow it, in turn, to focus more on what type of state it might become, attempting to reconcile the challenges of social and economic planning outlined above.

Difficult choices lie ahead – the referendum in September is but the first of many questions the Scottish electorate face when considering what kind of society they want their country to be.
Security and defence policy in an independent Scotland: aspirations and implications

By Alistair J.K. Shepherd

A 'Yes' vote in the referendum on Scottish independence on the 18th of September 2014 would have considerable ramifications for the security of both an Independent Scotland (IS) and the rest of the UK (rUK). For an IS it would mean constructing armed forces together with intelligence and security agencies for national defence while also contributing to European and international security; for the rUK there would be the immense challenge of finding a new base for Trident. Therefore, for both an IS and the rUK the challenge is to avoid a capabilities-expectations gap.

The Scottish Government’s (SG) 2013 White Paper on Independence sets high expectations, stressing that an IS would be a security provider, not a security consumer; tailoring its capabilities not just for its own security, but also the security of its allies. An IS would be part of NATO (a major policy reversal), on condition that nuclear weapons were not based in Scotland, and participate in the European Union’s (EU) security and defence policies. While membership of these organisations is not guaranteed, and joining either may not be as simple as the SG hopes, it is crucial to ensure the security guarantees and cooperation an IS will need. However, the ease with which it joins these organisations, especially NATO, will depend on how the SG handles negotiations with the Westminster government over removing Trident from Scotland. These negotiations will also determine the overall future of the SG’s security and defence aspirations.

The expectations for defence policy, set out in the White Paper, encompass three core tasks: securing Scotland’s borders, land, sea and airspace; protecting national interests, economic prosperity and key values; and, contributing to the protection and promotion of human rights, the rule of law, democratic values and international peace and security.

In addition, a wider range of aspirations drawn from the White Paper and the Scottish National Party’s (SNP) 2012 defence policy update include: maritime security, security of the High North and Arctic region, environmental and energy security, cybersecurity, and international peacekeeping. These tasks reflect Scotland’s geostrategic location and outlook, which in turn echo that of its Nordic neighbours, for whom the SG wishes to be a key partner. Indeed, the SG is modelling its defence policy and capabilities (and many of its other policies) on these states, particularly Denmark and Norway.

With a North European focus, a coastline of 11,000 miles and 800 islands, and critical offshore infrastructure, maritime security in the North Sea and North Atlantic is the main priority. The SG wants to work with its neighbours to fulfil what it sees as its responsibilities in the region, perhaps even joining Nordic defence arrangements such as NORDEFCO. This perspective means the High North and Arctic region is also a natural security priority for an IS. The key issues in the High North include managing the challenges arising from climate change and ensuring environmental protection in a region where both shipping, especially through the Northern Sea Route, and oil and gas extraction area are increasing. Closer to home maritime security is crucial for the Scottish economy: in 2012 oil and gas exports were estimated to be worth £30 billion, tourism (where the marine environment is an important component) £11 billion, the fishing industry £466 million in landed fish alone, and the offshore renewable energy industry is growing rapidly.

To fulfil these security tasks and ambitions the White Paper is keen to stress that an IS will not start from scratch, numerous military bases already exist and it will inherit a share of UK defence assets (equipment and personnel). On these foundations the SG plans to develop a 15,000 strong Scottish Defence Force (SDF) in three phases. At the point of independence (2016) the aim is to have 7,500 regular troops and 2000 reserves, which the SG believes is enough to defend territorial interests. This figure will rise to 10,000 regulars and 3500 reserves five years after independence, and to full strength, 15,000 regular and 5,000 reserves, after ten years. This sensible approach is nevertheless challenging, as its success depends on the equipment inherited from the rUK and recruiting enough experienced personnel from the rUK armed forces. Given the scaled back ambition of the SDF this will not be as easy as it appears. Due to the focus on maritime security, the SG prioritises air and naval capabilities, aiming, upon independence, to have a naval squadron (including two frigates, anti-mine vessels, and inshore and offshore patrol vessels) and 12 Typhoon fighter jets for Quick Reaction Alert.

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Within the first five years of independence the SG prioritises the procurement of four maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) to fill the gap left by the UK decision not to replace Nimrod, enhance its maritime capability and provide added value to its regional partners and NATO. In the same period, the White Paper calls for the development of a second naval squadron, including two further frigates, and four more Typhoons to contribute to NATO and other overseas operations. The MPA and additional naval and air assets are clear attempts to demonstrate an IS’s desire, and ability, to become a security provider, contributing to European and international security. Yet this commitment will not be cheap.

To tackle threats such as organised crime and terrorism and to protect critical economic and social infrastructure the SG wants a security and intelligence agency established upon independence. However, it admits that for quite some time it will need a great deal of assistance from the rUK (and EU and NATO agencies) in intelligence and cybersecurity. Here the aspiration of being a security provider, rather than consumer; seems a long way off. Finally, to secure its maritime environment, infrastructure and borders, an IS would need a coastguard and customs agency working closely with the SDF. These are barely mentioned, despite the emphasis on an integrated approach to national security; they will also add to the start up and long-term costs of a security and defence policy.

The ability to develop these capabilities will depend on the negotiations between the Scottish and Westminster governments. An IS will inherit a share of UK defence assets, considerably reducing the start up costs of a SDF. The assumption is that this will be based on Scotland’s population share of 8.6%, meaning, based on a 2007 Ministry of Defence estimate of its assets being worth just under £93 billion, an IS would received approximately £7.8 billion. Even if these figures remain uncontested, there will be substantial challenges in agreeing what this share would actually comprise, what equipment the Westminster government would relinquish, whether the equipment was appropriate for the SDF, and, if not, how the monetary equivalent would be calculated. Beyond the start up costs the SG has committed to an annual security and defence budget of £2.5 billion. Here too there are questions as to the budget is not solely for defence, it is also for security. While intelligence, internal security and cybersecurity are discussed elsewhere in the White Paper, and the SG again expects to inherit a share from the rUK, the start up costs and budgets are barely dealt with, only the annual costs of an intelligence and security agency are estimated (£206 million annually). If the costs encroach into the £2.5 billion defence and security budget the capabilities-expectations gap reappears. While, the budget is not too small per se (roughly 1.7% of GDP and therefore similar to Denmark) if it is made to stretch beyond defence it will struggle to meet the expectations.

A ‘Yes’ vote will also have very significant implications for the rUK, particularly for its nuclear deterrent. The SG’s objective is to secure the ‘speediest safe withdrawal of nuclear weapons’ with a ‘view’ to the removing them by 2020. This would not give the rUK much time to find and develop an alternative base for Trident, and the Defence Secretary argues it would take at least until 2026. Even if the SG agreed to wait until 2026, relocating Trident would be financially, politically and geographically extremely difficult. While there are deep-water ports, finding a suitable location for nuclear warhead storage facility will be infinitely harder, leading some to suggest it may mean the end of the UK’s nuclear deterrent. This has potential benefits, such as substantially more resources for the conventional armed forces and enhancing the rUK’s international standing as the first nuclear weapon state to fulfil its NPT obligation of nuclear disarmament. However, this is not an outcome supported by the three leading UK political parties, leaving them to overcome their own capabilities-expectations gap: the expectation of having a nuclear deterrent without the capability to relocate it.

A ‘Yes’ vote in the independence referendum will generate significant expectations within an IS, particularly as the SG has made it clear that the Nordic states are the model it aspires to. However, the political, financial and practical challenges in meeting these expectations, especially in security and defence policy, with the appropriate capabilities are not to be underestimated.
Independence and the immigration debate in Scotland

By Eve Hepburn

As the UK Government in London casts its weary eyes over the unfolding debate on independence in Scotland, the main issue that sends a shiver down its spine is not what you might expect. Certainly, questions surrounding the proposed currency union, where to put its nuclear arsenal if Scotland secedes, the loss of oil and gas reserves and the ramifications of a ‘broken UK’ on EU and NATO membership require a great deal of considered analysis and contingency planning.

But the issue that arguably scares London the most is not the loss of Scottish territory, resources and capability if voters choose independence on 18 September 2014, which at least it has time to carefully plan for. It is the potential gain of hundreds of thousands of unwanted migrants through the Scottish ‘back door’ to a combustible and anti-immigrant England if the SNP carry forward their plans to increase immigration; a scenario over which the UK Government would have little or no control.

This concern was palpable last month when the UK Shadow Home Secretary (and Labour MP) Yvette Cooper said that an independent Scotland would need one million new immigrants to pay for the pensions shortfall of a rapidly aging Scottish population – a scaremongering statement intended to change the minds of the yes-voting and undecided Scottish electorate.

Yet this analysis – and with it, the tacit threat that immigrants would hop, skip and jump over an unmanned border to England – possibly caused even greater concern to the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Government in London. David Cameron and his colleagues are furiously struggling – and pretty much failing – to manage the political effects of a tide of anti-immigrant public sentiment in England (which they themselves were largely responsible for creating) that looks set to bolster the electoral fortunes of the anti-immigrant UK Independence Party (UKIP) in the European elections in May. A UKIP victory would not only lead to the abject humiliation of the Coalition Government; it would also sound the death-knell for any chance of its re-election next year.

Interestingly, though, while UKIP is set to take the largest number of votes in the European elections in England (according to latest YouGov opinion polls), the party is set to make less of a splash and more of a dribble in Scotland, where it currently trails behind the SNP, Labour and the Conservatives. One reason for this is that UKIP is seen as an ‘English’ party that has no interest in Scottish issues. Another is that the widespread anti-immigrant sentiment that has resuscitated the party, Frankenstein-like, from the electoral backwater in England, simply does not exist in Scotland.

Immigration is an issue that barely skimmed the surface of Scottish political debates up until a year ago. Before the SNP passed legislation to hold an independence referendum, immigration was pretty much a non-story in the Scottish political and media mindset. There are a number of reasons for this. First is the demographic situation. The immigrant community only makes up about 7% of the overall Scottish population (less than half that of England), and while a handful of anti-immigrant stories have made the Scottish papers, the general perception is that Scotland’s small migrant community has integrated fairly well into Scottish society. Indeed, research conducted by Asifa Hussein & William Miller in their landmark book Multicultural Nationalism, revealed that immigrant communities – such as Pakistanis in Glasgow – consider themselves Scottish (not British) and are more likely to vote for independence and the SNP than the average Scot.

That leads to the second reason why immigration has not featured as a polarising issue north of the border: the overwhelmingly positive position of all of Scotland’s political parties – in particular, the Scottish National Party (SNP) but also even the ‘lesser-spotted’ Scottish Conservatives – on the issue of immigration. As Michael Rosie and myself have shown in our essay Immigration, Nationalism and Political Parties in Scotland (forthcoming in The Politics of Immigration in Multilevel States), Scottish political parties have carefully crafted an “elite discourse that portrays immigrants as key players in an open, inclusive and multicultural Scotland”. Scottish Labour and their Liberal Democrat government coalition partners were instrumental in developing a pluralistic vision of Scotland through the campaign ‘One Nation, Many Cultures’ to combat racism in the early 2000s.

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Since taking control of the Scottish Government in 2007, the SNP has built upon this campaign by articulating a civic, inclusive and multicultural identity for Scotland. It has also fought to increase immigration to Scotland (in retaliation against UK policy), not only for cold, hard economic reasons (though increasing economic and population growth is by far the most important consideration), but also – in a more humanistic vein – to enrich Scotland’s cultural diversity and international linkages. This positive endorsement contrasts sharply with UK politics where the topics of immigration and multiculturalism have been perceived as akin to uncontrollable wildfires that each of the main parties – the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats – have sought to put out, either by disowning them (as in the case of multiculturalism) or by rabidly attacking them (in the case of immigration).

Another reason why immigration has failed to polarise debates in Scotland is because of the broadly accepted need for more immigrants. In the mid-2000s former First Minister (Labour) Jack McConnell almost suffered from heart failure after reviewing statistics showing that Scotland’s population was in freefall. In response, he argued that “the single biggest challenge facing Scotland as we move further into the 21st century is our falling population,” and mobilised the Scottish Government to negotiate a modicum of devolved control over the (reserved) policy of immigration. This resulted in the moderately successful ‘Fresh Talent: Working in Scotland’ scheme, which extended the work permits of overseas graduates from Scottish Universities for two years. However, the Home Office quickly clawed back control of the initiative, extended it to the rest of the UK, and then abolished it. This aroused the hackles of the SNP government, for which immigration remains the key plank by which to grow the Scottish population.

Yet perhaps the most important reason why Scotland has escaped the anti-immigration hysteria that peppers political debates in England/UK is due to its lack of power on the issue. Scotland’s lack of competence over immigration policy allows it to subdue political mobilisation, to avert responsibility – and culpability – to the UK Government on unpopular aspects of immigration, and to avoid the glare of media attention on rising numbers. However, this is all set to change if the SNP receives the news it wants to hear on polling day this September.

If Scotland became independent, the SNP has pledged to whip up a storm of new policies that diverge radically from those of the UK Government – in welfare policy, nuclear policy, EU policy and many others... Yet the most flammable of policies – and the one likely to cause the most tensions with the rest of the UK Government (rUK) – is with regard to immigration.

The issue of public opinion on immigration is an interesting one. Research by the Oxford Migration Observatory has revealed that Scots are less likely to see immigration as a problem than their English brethren, though not radically so. The Observatory found that 20% of Scots would support the number of immigrants being increased by “a lot”, which compared with only 2% in favour of increased flows in the south of England. Researchers at the Observatory have put the more positive Scottish attitudes down to Scotland’s more ‘tolerant political culture’. But this does not mean that Scots want more immigrants. The most recent survey by the Observatory found that the majority of Scots support reduced immigration (58%), though this is far lower than England and Wales (75%).

First Minister Alex Salmond has consistently criticized London’s immigration policies as ‘perverse’ and ‘damaging’ to the interests of Scotland, especially its economic interests. The Government Economic Strategy stated that “the Scottish Government believes that an annual limit on immigration is too blunt an instrument to address the complex needs of an economy, and we have repeatedly made the case to the UK Government to work with us to take a more flexible approach to the immigration cap in Scotland.” However, the UK Government has consistently said that it will do nothing of the sort; by making even a passing nod to increasing levels of immigration in the UK (even if only to Scotland) would earn the Coalition Government the wrath of the far-right (including UKIP and the British National Party), the left (if we can call the British Labour Party that any more), the British media (where readership of the sensationalist anti-immigrant Daily Mail is amongst the highest of any paper) and thereby the British (that is, English) public at large.
These figures, if representative, mean that the majority of Scots do not support the SNP’s policy – and indeed, the approach of all of Scotland’s parties – towards increasing levels of immigration. But this doesn’t seem to bother Alex Salmond. His focus is on convincing Scots voters of the need for an ‘enlightened approach’ to immigration, which he views as an economic necessity. If Scotland becomes independent, the SNP will create a Scottish points-based system that increases net levels of immigration with the aim of raising Scotland’s demographic growth rate to the EU average. Furthermore, the SNP are committed to a more humane refugee and asylum policy, which would put a halt to the ‘dawn raids’ of detention centres. While the policy of encouraging ‘healthy population growth’ and enhancing refugee rights would go down like a lead balloon if it were initiated in England/the UK, in Scotland the most outspoken professional organisations – business federations, trades unions, and civic society – have rallied around this plan.

But while the SNP’s plans for increased immigration haven’t caused much of a stir in Scotland, the fall-out south of the border has been dramatic. The UK Government has been quick to oppose the SNP’s plans as ‘undermining’ the work they’ve done in scaling back immigration. Home Secretary Theresa May filled our minds with images of border posts and barbed wire along Hadrian’s Wall (a defensive fortification created by the Romans in England to keep out the ‘barbarian’ Scots of the north). She argued that wildly different immigration policies in rUK and Scotland would necessitate stricter controls, including passport checks. The SNP said this would be unnecessary. London has also emphasized the EU dimension, saying that Scotland wouldn’t be able to join the EU Schengen agreement (allowing the free movement of EU citizens – which the UK does not allow) if it wanted to remain within the current Common Travel Area (CTA) with rUK and the Republic of Ireland. The SNP said that the two were not mutually incompatible. Finally, the UK Secretary of State for Scotland warned that an independent Scotland would face ‘incredible expense’ to protect its borders from terrorism and illegal immigration. The SNP said that the analysis lacked all credibility. And so the debate continues.

It is uncertain at this present time – four months before the referendum is due to be held – what the outcome will be. The most recent polls show that the yes camp is catching up, though it still has some way to go (yes 34%; no 54%; undecided 12%). Much could change in the next few months, however: If Scotland votes yes, we will likely see an immigration policy that is radically different from the rUK, though perhaps not as liberal as the SNP might like if public opinion and the media come down hard on increasing immigration. Scotland would likely be part of a Common Travel Area, and any border posts would need to be created by the rUK Government, mimicking the original purpose of Hadrian’s Wall in keeping out the unwanted Scots, though this time it would be unwanted immigrant Scots.

If Scotland votes no, however, there will still be changes afoot in the area of immigration. The SNP wants a regionally based points system in the UK to attract potential immigrants to move to Scotland, which has also received some support from the unionist cross-party Scottish Commission on Devolution.

But what is clear is that regardless of the outcome, the issue of immigration is emblematic of a dividing line between Scottish and UK politics, where the forces of conservatism come head-to-head with one of the few remaining bastions of social democracy in the UK. And it is this that Scots will be thinking about when they go to the polls. Rather than being a vote about endorsing a vision of narrow Scottish nationalism (which has revealed the utter ignorance of some political commentators), the independence referendum vote will be about public policy and improving the lives of Scots – both native and newly arrived. And if the SNP play their cards right, it will also be a reflection on the ideological alienation of Scottish voters from the UK Government’s knee-jerk neoconservative policies – such as the inhumane treatment of asylum seekers and their children – as much as the hope for a new beginning in a more inclusive Scotland.
Referendums and the British experience

By Stephen Barber

Scotland goes to the polls in September to decide whether it wishes to leave the UK. Whatever the outcome, this historic vote presents an opportunity to consider the place of referendums in the constitution of modern Britain, why they are held and whether such votes ever resolve difficult issues.

The constitutional scholar A.V. Dicey wrote that referendums could ‘by checking the omnipotence of partisanship, revive faith in that parliamentary government which has been the glory of English constitutional history’. It was not to happen in any serious form for more than 50 years after his death and in the event it is difficult to argue that the nineteenth century constitutional colossus was in any way right. In comparison to other democracies, referendums remain something of a novelty in Britain and there have only ever been two nationwide votes of this kind. The first of these was on the UK remaining part of the European Community in 1975; the second being the 2011 referendum about changing the Westminster electoral system.

The constitutional mechanism perhaps seems more of a permanent fixture for two reasons: Firstly, many parts of the country have experienced regional or local referendums either in the 1970s or since 1997. Aside from the major votes detailed in this article, there have been numerous smaller elections in different parts of the country since 2001 for people to decide if they would like to be represented by a local Mayor. During the same period there were three local authorities finding out if voters would accept tax rises in exchange for improved services and a vote in Edinburgh on a proposed congestion charge. Secondly, politicians have become accustomed to promising plebiscites in order to resolve otherwise problematic issues. To this extent, the list of promised national referendums outnumber those which have actually taken place. Blair’s government, for instance, promised votes on Britain joining the Euro, changing the electoral system and (later) on the European Constitution, which never materialised. The 2010 Coalition has legislated to ‘bind’ successor administrations with a referendum ‘lock’ in the event of treaties which pass more power to the EU, the Conservatives in coalition have outlined plans for an ‘in-out’ referendum on EU membership following as yet unclear ‘renegotiation’ while in response Labour Leader Ed Miliband has pledged a vote should future powers be transferred to Brussels. Elsewhere, as a fruit of the Coalition, the 2011 Localism Act requires local authorities who wish to bring in Council Tax rises above those agreed by the Secretary of State, to first hold binding referendums (a measure attacked as ‘absurd’ by Local Government Minister Stephen Williams). Again, not a single cross has been marked on a ballot paper.

Initiated by central government, any referendum on the Council Tax would be constitutionally unusual since (like the 1920 prohibition vote in Scotland or several in Wales during the 1960s on pub opening hours) it would concern what political scientist Peter A. Hall might describe as ‘first order’ policy change; that is relatively minor year-on-year adjustments. By contrast, all the significant referendums to have taken place in the contemporary period relate to what might be thought of as ‘third order’ (or near to third order) change. That is policy change (or even constitutional change) on a paradigmatic scale and involving the passing of power up or down from Westminster on a near permanent basis.

In a parliamentary system, referendums do not support first order policy change too well since they jar somewhat with the democratic process. That is the chamber whose constitutional role it is to vote and hold governments to account not only gives up power on a given issue but also responsibility.

Nonetheless, when it comes to constitutional reform today, most politicians seem committed to referendums where change is of or close to a third order. It would be unthinkable to say replace the Pound without a vote and while there is no fundamental constitutional force the fact that a proposal has the backing of the people helps to ensure future governments do not simply unwind the policy. One might highlight the creation of the Greater London Assembly and its accompanying Mayor here which enjoyed a 72% backing of the people in 1998 (albeit on a 34% turnout); a mandate which might make future governments think twice if it became as troublesome for Whitehall as did the Greater London Council which was abolished by the Thatcher government in 1986.
That being said, where circumstances involve simply democratically legitimising previously appointed power, referendums have not been deemed necessary. This is evidenced by the introduction of elected Police Commissioners and the (failed) attempt to democratise the House of Lords neither of which were subject to referendums and which took place in the 2010 Parliament.

There are numerous motivations for staging referendums which are not always constitutionally pure. The plebiscites in the 1970s can trace much of their origins to the need for managing party divisions, something which would seem to be a feature of all the more recent referendum pledges about Europe. The 2011 AV referendum served as a way of managing the coalition agreement between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats and can be seen as the minimum concession the junior partner would accept for committing to government. Here Mats Qvortrup has gone so far as to categorise referendums in terms of decision-solving, legislative, strategic, legitimation, and politically obligatory.

While popular participation in the decision making process can be seen to add legitimacy, the mere staging of a referendum cannot be said to settle an issue any more decisively than a vote in Parliament. They do not allow parties or politicians to, as Tony Benn remarked over Europe in 1975, ‘get it out of our system’. It might have been argued by unionists that the 1973 referendum unequivocally signalled the desire of the people in Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK but (seriously flawed as the process was) it did nothing to calm the ‘troubles’ (indeed possibly the contrary) or dispense with the need for a peace process and later power sharing. The 1975 vote which supported Britain remaining in the EEC did not stop the principal opposition Labour Party from going to the electorate just 8 years later pledging to withdraw (with Benn as the major cheerleader). Scottish and Welsh devolution referendums in the late 1970s did not mean that future governments would not engineer a repeat process. While the rejection of a North East Assembly put paid to the plan for regional devolution, politicians remain interested in new centres of power. The loss of the AV referendum in 2011 has not dampened the enthusiasm of electoral reformers. Indeed, it might be possible to view some referendum losses not so much as closing the matter but as almost a ‘stalking horse’ which galvanises minority support for a future putsch.

A final observation about referendums in the British experience is that they can serve to break down the adversarial ‘Westminster model’ so tribal and unused to cooperation. Major referendums have been seen to create alliances of political adversaries. This was especially true of the 1975 campaign for British membership of the EEC, which divided parties along policy lines and led Roy Jenkins to comment that a natural consequence was ‘the encouragement of a coalition of mood if not form’. It is also true of the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence. While not fractious in the sense of dividing opinion within parties, there has been a concerted effort from the Westminster parties to wrong-foot the Alex Salmond-led independence campaign.

Referendums have a sporadic history in Britain but have usually been employed for constitutionally troublesome issues and policies which divide opinion within parties. Rarely have they lived up to Dicey’s ideal of support for high quality parliamentary debate. And while they might be said to increase legitimacy, they are relative failures at settling issues. Nonetheless, if the Scottish vote ‘yes’ in September, then going back will be very difficult indeed.

Further reading:
Football and ‘The Auld Enemy’: Anglo-Scottish rivalry and national consciousness

By Richard Holt

I went to Scotland in 1974 to work as a lecturer in History at Stirling University. I am an Englishman, born across the border in Newcastle – ‘Geordies’ are just about acceptable in Scottish terms - but I had been educated in the bosom of the English elite at Oxford. But I never thought much about England or being English - until I went to Scotland, and started to play football there. I was quickly made aware of my true identity as ‘an English bastard’. This was news to me. But, it seemed, I had unwittingly acquired the veneer of the English ‘gentleman amateur’ - at least in the eyes of opponents on the football field. Suddenly, I was exposed to a deep strain of raw Anglo-Scottish resentment from which I had briefly been shielded by my academic friends and colleagues.

As I walked out for my first match in the Edinburgh amateur football league in 1977, I tried to chat with a member of the opposing team. ‘Nice day for a game’... ‘haven’t played for years’...‘should be fun’. He remained silent but as we neared the pitch he snarled, ‘I’m gonna break your f***** English leg’ and trudged off. I was reassured by my Scottish team mates, mostly teachers, who said to have replied ‘you must be f***** joking’. He knew his English was poured into – but also contained by the social history of sport in France.

For Scots there was nothing like it; it was the biggest game in their calendar and in their world. Crowds had been huge from the early twentieth century with over a 100,000 at Hampden Park in Glasgow before the First World War, rising to around 150,000 in the 1930s, when it literally was the ‘biggest match in the world’; the end of season England-Scotland match remained hugely popular in Scotland until it was ended by the English Football Association in the 1980s on the grounds of fixture congestion and the fear of hooliganism. For the Scots it was a set piece confrontation between two nations – not the English nation and a ‘region’ as many English thought of Scotland – but the Scottish nation represented through a team of eleven Scotsmen, and preferably ones who played in Scotland rather than the ‘Anglos’ who had gone south for the money.

Hence the game was always far more important to the Scots than to the English – a fact that served to confirm Scottish sentiments about their powerful, arrogant and condescending neighbour. Hence, too, the delight at going to Wembley and beating England, never more so than in 1967 when Denis Law and Jim Baxter led a team which defeated ‘the World Champions’ on their own ground. Baxter cheekily taunted the English, even juggling the ball in midfield as if he were out in the park, challenging the English, who were perceived as dull, efficient and organised, with a dash of celtic flair.

“When asked how he celebrated after the match, Baxter said ‘I went to the pub – for fourteen years’ Sad, he wasn’t joking. When the World Cup winning England manager, Alf Ramsay, arrived in Glasgow, he was allegedly greeted with the words ‘Welcome to Scotland’. To which the usually reserved Ramsay is said to have replied ‘you must be f***** joking’. He knew his Scottish football. The Scottish press deliberately ignored England’s greatest moment in 1966 and took delight in the fact that Scotland qualified for the World Cup in 1974 and 1978 when England did not. It was as if all the pent-up Scottish resentment of the English was poured into – but also contained by and within – this match.

“In an era before the creation of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, it is argued football was a substitute for proper constitutional politics. The ‘Tartan Army’ were ‘90 minute patriots’, waving the Saltire around Europe instead of getting seriously engaged in creating a new country.”

By Richard Holt is Professor of History at the School of Humanities, de Montfort University. He is the author of Sport and the British a Modern History (Oxford University Press, 1999) and Sport in Britain 1945-2000 with Tony Mason (Blackw, 2000). His doctorate, completed in 1977 at St. John's College, Oxford, concerned the social history of sport in France.
English amusement at Scotland’s disaster in Argentina in 1978 was too much to bear. This humiliation was widely invoked as a factor in the failure to win a decisive mandate in the referendum for a devolved assembly in the following year. Scottish (male) identity was so bound up with football that the sense of national confidence, which had flourished in the 1970s with the SNP and ‘Scotland’s oil’, ground to a halt.

What is the wider relevance of these old football wars as Scotland approaches a historic referendum on national independence in September? In an era before the creation of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, it is argued football was a substitute for proper constitutional politics. The ‘Tartan Army’ were ‘90 minute patriots’, waving the Saltire around Europe instead of getting seriously engaged in creating a new country. Would the passion for the national team subside with the creation of the Devolution settlement? Would football no longer be expected to fill the patriotic vacuum? Support for the Scotland team, it is true, has fluctuated in recent years. But the reason seems not so much political as lack of success, failure to qualify for the World Cup and the striking lack of great players in a country that had once produced so many. Yet, as last year’s revival of the England-Scotland game held in honour of the 150th anniversary of the FA showed, tradition dies hard and passionate Scots flocked to Wembley in vast numbers, draped in Scottish flags.

Scotland is divided over independence and there is no simple correlation between the fans of the national team and the wider campaign for independence. Male manual workers, who still makes up the majority of Scottish fans, remain mostly Labour voters and Labour opposes independence. Those who are Scottish to the core on the terraces are split about the wisdom or necessity of breaking up the United Kingdom, whose four constituent parts for so long provided a structure for the expression of national identity within a framework of allegiance to the United Kingdom and the wider British Empire, in which Scotland had a disproportionately large and successful role. Scotland went from a small poor country in the seventeenth century to a small richer one by the twentieth. Independence simply wasn’t an issue.

National rivalry was confined to sport.

“Those days are gone now, and in the past must remain”, as both rugby and football fans sing in their anthem, ‘Flower of Scotland’ – composed in the 1970s – recalling the medieval struggle between the two kingdoms. But they might as well be referring to more recent times and the settled days of Empire when Scotland had a large Conservative Party (a majority in the 1950s and now reduced to one MP); when the trade unions formed a tight unifying cross-border force; when Protestantism was still a common factor, and Westminster sovereignty had not been partially ceded to Brussels and Edinburgh. In those days Scots were Scottish and British and on the whole happy to belong to what was a culturally homogenous and economically successful British state. Today there is less to hold the British together. On the other hand, what concerns many ordinary Scots is financial security and jobs in the wake of the crash of 2008, in which the Royal Bank of Scotland and Halifax Bank of Scotland, both based in Edinburgh, were bailed out by England. This was a timely reminder of the values of the ‘big tent’ in the era of volatile global capitalism. The RBS cash machines were within hours of closing down when 45 billion pounds was pumped in by the Bank of England.

So the independence ‘match’ is as nicely poised, rather like the England-Scotland games of old. But on this occasion the powerful currents of sub-cultural sporting nationalism seem unlikely to influence the outcome of the independence referendum as they did on devolution in 1979. We must wait and see. The holding of the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow just before the vote is seen by the SNP as a chance to show what an independent Scotland could do. And imagine if Scotland today had a team like the ‘Wembley Wizards’ of 1928, who thrashed England 5-1, with forwards in their time as good as a Messi or a Ronaldo today. If Scotland were sending such a team to Brazil this summer, then surely the ‘Yes’ campaign would be swept along on a tide of football patriotism. But this is fantasy. Scottish football is no longer good enough to bear the weight of Scottish expectation.
By Stephen Noon

Independence is a democratic imperative

Today, in Scotland, we are living through a nation-changing event. Before we even consider the positive benefits of a Yes vote in the referendum in September, our country has been changed for good, because the very process of debating and considering independence has released new political energies and generated widespread interest, participation and discussion throughout society.

Despite what you may read from some commentators, especially in the London-based media, our debate and decision is not Scotland v England. It is not about how we view the people of the rest of the UK but, instead, how we view ourselves. Yes is a vote for Scotland not against anyone else.

In 2005, many of the events to mark the centenary of Norwegian independence were grouped under the title ‘A Voice of Our Own’. For Scotland, I would choose a different description (and driving force): ‘Decisions of Our Own’. It is a democratic imperative that we should get the governments we vote for and yet, time after time, Scotland has been governed by politicians the majority of us have absolutely and firmly rejected. Westminster governments with only limited support in Scotland consistently take forward economic and social policies that go against the grain of Scottish public opinion and which are not based on our specific needs or priorities. While the Scottish Parliament has responsibility for some domestic affairs (e.g. health, police and education), the most important economic levers, and welfare provision, remain in Westminster’s hands. A Yes would bring these powers home to Scotland.

Our basic premise is that, more often than not, decisions made in Scotland, for Scotland, will be better for our long-term future. While Scotland is an afterthought for so much Westminster policy making, what is best for the people of Scotland would be an independent Scottish government’s central concern. Building on this democratic foundation, the Yes message is presented in two distinct ways. First, we set out Scotland’s enormous economic strengths and potential, which, together, prove beyond doubt that we can be a successful, independent nation. Second, we consider what more can be done with this wealth to make life better for the people of Scotland, arguments that tell us we should be and must be independent.

Strange as it might seem, ‘can we be independent’ is, for many people in Scotland, the first and most important question. They want to vote Yes but have been told for years by No politicians that we are somehow uniquely incapable of independence, that we are too small, too poor and too dependent on Westminster largesse (to paraphrase much of the No narrative). Once this hurdle of lack of confidence in Scotland’s capacities is overcome, attitudes shift.

Ultimately, we should be independent so we can make Scotland’s resources and wealth work better for people living in Scotland. We would, for example, be able to save £600 million each year by no longer paying for the UK’s nuclear weapons or sending politicians to London; resources which could be used to increase childcare provision and early years education. And, we must be independent because the Westminster system is taking Scotland down the wrong path, with its agenda of austerity and the dismantling of key aspects of our welfare state, policies most Scots are opposed to. The UK is now one of the most socially and geographically imbalanced and unequal states in the developed world and every indication is that this trend is set to continue. Westminster no longer represents Scotland, and yet Westminster continues to govern Scotland.

The Yes movement has a very clear understanding of what independence means in an increasingly interdependent world. We are comfortable with overlapping and shared sovereignties, whether as part of the EU or in developing the new partnership we seek with the other nations of the United Kingdom – a partnership I’ve previously described as ‘co-operative independence’, and which is modelled in many ways on the Scandinavian experience. Contrary to the Westminster parties’ view that the UK is the most successful union of nations on the planet, I would argue that the most successful union in the world is Scandinavia as a union or partnership of independent states. Just as Norway is an independent Nordic nation, Scotland can be an independent British nation, open to the world and working closely with our nearest neighbours.

YesScotland has a clear strategic approach. As a campaign, we have sought to look forward, presenting a case based on hope and optimism: identifying the problems we face and the weaknesses in the current arrangements, yes, but most importantly, focusing most of all on the solutions and what more we can achieve as an independent nation. In essence, we are showing total confidence in the people of Scotland, and, after all, why would anyone choose dependence over independence?
Scotland can have the best of both worlds

By Nigel Anthony

The people of Scotland will make a historic choice in September. Breaking up a successful political, social and economic partnership which has endured through times of war to build a modern welfare state on principles of social solidarity, is after all, not a decision to be taken lightly. This contribution will outline the economic case for the UK on the understanding that Scotland can have the best of both worlds: more of the decisions that matter to the people of Scotland being taken here in Scotland, backed up by the strength, stability and security of the UK.

Our national debate has centred on the economic issues that voters consistently highlight as their primary concern, rather than a preoccupation with nationality and nationhood. It is a comfortable position for our campaign because, rather than nationalism, it is the pressures which affect people in their everyday lives that define the purpose of our politics and the causes of our time.

Understandably many voters feel uncertain as to what a separate state would entail, and several important issues remain unclear. Will an independent Scotland be part of the EU? What currency would a separate Scotland use? The nationalists have struggled to present clear answers to this, and the SNP’s White Paper resembled a wish list without a price list, citing only one page of economic analysis limited to one financial year.

There is greater certainty about the fiscal position of an independent Scotland. The most complete analysis has been presented by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), which concluded that even under the most optimistic scenario an independent Scotland would face a gap between tax income and spending more than twice as large as the rest of the UK.

The economic case for the UK is a compelling one. It has been remarked that the case for nationalism may be based on many things, but it is not fundamentally one of economics – as demonstrated by the IFS.

The challenges Scotland faces with an ageing population combined with fewer people in the workforce and falling oil revenues will necessitate significantly constrained public spending if we leave the UK. Being backed by the larger UK economy means we can pool and share our resources to ensure we meet our commitments to pensioners, without putting public services at risk.

Let us move on to the economic benefits of an integrated economy. Scotland’s economic performance is very good by UK standards. This success has been possible as part of a wider home market which promotes free trade beyond that which a single market like the EU has achieved. Scotland is a nation of 5 million people operating within a home market of over 60 million customers; a market which enables Scotland, and our people, to specialise in what we are best at.

Historically, Scotland succeeded in trade, and then in heavy industry. Today we also excel in higher education, financial services, in life sciences and in many other fields. Scotland is, for example, the biggest hub for financial services in the UK outside of London, with an estimated 200,000 jobs dependent on the sector, and 90% of its customers elsewhere in the UK. If Scotland becomes a separate state, this UK home market will be hindered and standards of living would inevitably suffer.

The UK is also a well-functioning fiscal union which, together with an effective banking union, supports both a single currency and a system of social solidarity that promotes social cohesion. The UK pools economic and other risks (whether banking crises, natural resource revenues or longevity trends), and so absorbs economic shocks, enabling us to better meet the need wherever it arises to the benefit of all.

Our campaign also holds a strong belief that being part of the UK gives us the opportunity to build on the success of our Scottish Parliament with guaranteed further powers. Devolution enjoys broad public support because it is based on an idea bigger than independence. New powers on taxation and borrowing have already been devolved, due to be phased in by 2016, and all three political parties that support Better Together are committed to supporting further powers for the Scottish Parliament if we vote to remain in the UK.

A vote to stay in the UK means these guaranteed further powers become part of the fabric of Scottish politics. A vote for separation would mean they never take effect. The choice in the referendum is therefore clear: between continuing the success of devolution or separation. We can choose the best of both worlds: a strengthened Scottish Parliament making more of the decisions that matter to the people of Scotland, backed up by the strength, stability and security of the UK.
The SNP and the art of cherry picking

By Atle L. Wold

In essence, the SNP’s case for Scottish independence boils down to one central argument: the idea of the nation-state, and the principle of a nation’s right to self-determination. Because Scotland is an ancient historic nation, it should also be an independent state, if that is what the Scots want. In today’s political world, however, this argument – though not one that is necessarily dismissed – is not normally perceived as sufficient grounds for the creation of a new state. That is, unless the nation in question is suffering oppression, but no one would seriously claim that this is the case for Scotland as a part of the United Kingdom. For that reason, perhaps, the SNP does not stress the nation-state point very much in its argumentation, but has instead adopted another, and very specific strategy to support its bid for independence.

Scotland ought to become independent because that is how it can best “fulfil its potential” to use a phrase sometimes adopted by the party. As it is now, Scotland is “held back” by a union which has served its purpose, and is well past it sell-by date. While the SNP may admit that the union played a positive role for Scotland in the past, this is no longer the case, and the natural place for the country in the future is therefore outside this union. The party thus focusses on a forward-looking argument, rather than one saying that Scotland should be independent because it was so at some point in the past. Central to this approach is the use of “model countries”, and the emphasis the party places on the ways in which Scotland differs from the rest of the UK or, rather, from England. The SNP’s vision is for a multicultural, social-democratic Scotland which finds its place in the world (and within the EU, if it is admitted) alongside other similar-sized small countries, and which distances itself from its British past, and from any aspirations London holds for a continued great power-status for the UK.

The models for an independent Scotland are preferably to be found in the Nordic region, though in 2006, the SNP’s leader Alex Salmond expanded this to include Ireland in his “arc of prosperity”. Within the arc, there were no fewer than four small countries which had all gained their independence in the twentieth century – Ireland, Iceland, Norway and Finland – and done well for themselves thereafter; so why not Scotland too? Salmond proceeded to find encouraging similarities between Scotland and all the countries in the “reference-group”. Thus the Scottish “Lion” could emulate the “Celtic Tiger” Ireland, and build a new high-tech industry based on a business-friendly tax regime, and perhaps also the odd EU subsidy. The strong Scottish banking sector could follow the example of Iceland and, most crucially perhaps, if Scotland became independent, it could build a Norwegian-style oil-fund since – according to SNP calculations – about 90 per cent of the oil and gas reserves in the British sector of the North Sea would end up within Scottish territorial waters. And so on. The references to Iceland and Ireland came crashing down with the financial crisis of 2008, but the SNP did not abandon its use of model countries because of these set-backs. Instead they focused even more on what is arguably their preferred model: Norway. Apart from the obvious oil-analogy, Norway also represented an agreeable model because of similar types of natural resources and industries – fishery, fish farming, forestry and renewables such as wind power, for example – and a welfare system much to the liking of the SNP. Moreover, since Norway emerged largely unscathed by the financial crisis, the Norwegian financial model clearly had to be a workable one.

Yet, as with all the model countries the SNP have used, there is an element of cherry picking involved. For every similarity found, there will also be marked differences, and these the SNP arguably chooses to ignore.

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The models for an independent Scotland are preferably to be found in the Nordic region, though in 2006, the SNP’s leader Alex Salmond expanded this to include Ireland in his “arc of prosperity”. Within the arc, there were no fewer than four small countries which had all gained their independence in the twentieth century – Ireland, Iceland, Norway and Finland – and done well for themselves thereafter; so why not Scotland too? Salmond proceeded to find encouraging similarities between Scotland and all the countries in the “reference-group”. Thus the Scottish “Lion” could emulate the “Celtic Tiger” Ireland, and build a new high-tech industry based on a business-friendly tax regime, and perhaps also the odd EU subsidy. The strong Scottish banking sector could follow the example of Iceland and, most crucially perhaps, if Scotland became independent, it could build a Norwegian-style oil-fund since – according to SNP calculations – about 90 per cent of the oil and gas reserves in the British sector of the North Sea would end up within Scottish territorial waters. And so on. The references to Iceland and Ireland came crashing down with the financial crisis of 2008, but the SNP did not abandon its use of model countries because of these set-backs. Instead they focused even more on what is arguably their preferred model: Norway. Apart from the obvious oil-analogy, Norway also represented an agreeable model because of similar types of natural resources and industries – fishery, fish farming, forestry and renewables such as wind power, for example – and a welfare system much to the liking of the SNP. Moreover, since Norway emerged largely unscathed by the financial crisis, the Norwegian financial model clearly had to be a workable one.

Yet, as with all the model countries the SNP have used, there is also with respect to the favoured Norwegian model an element of cherry picking involved. For every similarity found, there will also be marked differences, and these the SNP arguably chooses to ignore. Let us look at one prominent example: there is an analogy between the SNP’s view of Scotland as the “odd one out” in the British Isles – the country which fits more naturally into the Nordic region – and the Norwegian perception of annelerdeslandet, the country which is so different from the rest of Europe, so as to have no natural place within the European Union. But Norwegian EU scepticism does not, of course, suit the SNP’s Norwegian ideal. Similarly, the SNP has remained very quiet on the fact that the referendum for independence coincides with the anniversary of the most important event in the development of the modern Norwegian state – the bicentenary of the Constitution of 1814. Perhaps they just have not noticed? Or perhaps it does not suit their perception of Norway that we do not actually celebrate independence day, and that 1814 – arguably the annus mirabilis of Norwegian history – completely overshadows the year of full independence, 1905? Anyone care to make a guess?
by Angus Robertson MP

The event is held against the backdrop of the forthcoming independence referendum in Scotland. Mr Robertson’s lecture will map out the party’s positions on foreign and defence matters and its prospects for closer cooperation with the Nordic countries in the event of a “Yes” to independence on 18 September.

Angus Robertson has been a Member of Parliament since 2001, representing Moray. He is the Scottish National Party’s Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, its Parliamentary Leader in the House of Commons, and party spokesman on Defence and Europe.

Monday 2 June 2014 at 16.30 - 18.00
at the University of Oslo, Domus Academica, auditorium 6 ("Urbygningen", Karl Johans gt 47; signs will direct you on the day).

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Forthcoming edition of British Politics Review

Following the general election of 15 October 1964, the Labour Party entered government after thirteen years of Conservative rule.

The election was a momentous one, seeing a grammar school prime minister (Harold Wilson) succeed a Lord (Alec Douglas-Home) against the backdrop of the swinging sixties and the perception of a society where education and mobility would trump class.

The Wilson government ruled initially by a wafer-thin majority of four. It was strengthened by the 1966 election and remained in power till 1970. Although a government faced by great expectations on the left, it was characterised less by grand economic reforms than by enhanced civil liberties. Internationally, Wilson’s rejection of the Vietnam War points itself out. In the summer issue of British Politics Review, we discuss the paradoxes, achievements and shortcomings of the Wilson government on its 50th anniversary.

The summer edition of British Politics Review is due to arrive in August 2014.