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Scottish Independence Idea before and after Brexit

Idea niepodległości Szkocji przed Brexitem i po Brexicie

• Abstract •

The article focuses on the idea of Scottish independence both before and after Britain's exit from the European Union. The research aims to assess Scotland's chances of becoming an independent country. Over the centuries, Scotland has made several attempts to separate from Great Britain, but all have failed. Also, the Scottish 2014 referendum turned out a defeat for supporters of independence and set back Scottish independence aspirations. Nonetheless, Brexit became a compelling argument for supporters of independence to hold a new referendum, as 62% of Scots were against leaving the EU. The main research method is based on a critical review of the literature and source materials. The system and comparative methods and elements of the institutional-legal method were also used to write the paper.

The article's assessment of a modern Scotland's idea of independence indicates that EU membership has been beneficial for Scots in many respects. It also outlines the challenges that Scotland may have to face once full sovereignty is achieved.

It was shown that the idea of independence is still a lively aspect of Scottish politics. However, it is worth noting that support for Scottish separation from the UK can change as a result of various factors. Moreover, Westminster is strongly

• Abstrakt •

Artykuł koncentruje się na idei niepodległości Szkocji zarówno przed Brexitem, jak i po wyjściu Wielkiej Brytanii z Unii Europejskiej. Badanie ma na celu zdiagnozowanie szans Szkocji na stanie się niepodległym krajem. Na przestrzeni wieków Szkocja podjęła kilka prób odłączenia się od Wielkiej Brytanii, ale wszystkie zakończyły się niepowodzeniem. Również szkockie referendum z 2014 r. okazało się porażką dla zwolenników niepodległości i zahamowało szkockie aspiracje związane z tą ideą. Niemniej Brexit stał się przekonującym argumentem dla zwolenników niepodległości, aby przeprowadzić nowe referendum, ponieważ 62% Szkotów było przeciwnych opuszczeniu UE. Główna metoda badawcza opiera się na krytycznym przeglądzie literatury i materiałów źródłowych. Do napisania artykułu wykorzystano również metodę systemową i porównawczą oraz elementy metody instytucjonalno-prawnej.

Zawarta w artykule ocena idei niepodległości współczesnej Szkocji wskazuje, że członkostwo w UE było dla Szkotów korzystne pod wieloma względami. Przedstawiono również wyzwania, z jakimi Szkocja będzie musiała się zmierzyć po uzyskaniu pełnej suwerenności.

Wykazano, że idea niepodległości jest wciąż żywym aspektem szkockiej polityki. Warto jednak

opposed to Scotland's secession plans as its desire is to maintain the unity and stability of the United Kingdom.

The Scottish Government continues to support the independence idea, however, it would be possible only with public approval, and currently the majority of Scots oppose the idea and the referendum defeat would almost certainly close the door to Scottish independence for many years.

zauważyć, że poparcie dla oddzielenia się Szkocji od Wielkiej Brytanii może ulec zmianie w wyniku różnych czynników. Co więcej, Westminster zdecydowanie sprzeciwia się planom secesji Szkocji, ponieważ jego pragnieniem jest utrzymanie jedności i stabilności Zjednoczonego Królestwa.

Szkocki rząd nadal popiera niepodległość, jednak byłaby ona możliwa tylko przy akceptacji społeczeństwa, a obecnie większość Szkotów jest przeciwna temu pomysłowi i porażka referendum niemal na pewno zamknęłaby drogę do niepodległości Szkocji na wiele lat.

Keywords: Scottish independence; Brexit; Scottish referendum; Scottish National Party (SNP)

Słowa kluczowe: niepodległość Szkocji; Brexit; referendum szkockie; Szkocka Partia Narodowa

Introduction

In March 2021, the Scottish Government introduced an independence referendum bill. Then, in May 2021, the referendum issue appeared as an important element of the political debate before the elections to the Scottish Parliament. The former First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon informed that the Scottish National Party (SNP) would hold a second referendum if there was a majority in Scottish Parliament supporting independence (*Scotland's Future*, 2021, p. 12). In the May 2021 election manifesto, the Scottish National Party announced that it would strive to hold a referendum, but only when “the COVID-19 crisis is over”. The same manifesto emphasized that the Scottish Government “discuss with the UK Government the necessary transfer of power to put a referendum beyond a legal challenge” (Institute for Government, 2021). Nicola Sturgeon's successor Humza Yousaf also insisted on the need for another independence referendum. He announced that there would be discussions with the British Government about the need for another referendum after the next general election, which must be held by January 2025 (Sim, 2023).

In fact, the independence issue resurfaced much earlier, when British citizens decided for Brexit. For independence supporters, leaving the European Union became an important argument for the necessity to hold a new referendum on Scottish separation from the United Kingdom, as 62% of Scots voted in 2016 to stay in the EU. Contemporary Scotland has benefited from the EU integration and has now become an economically strong region. Leaving the European Union “against the

will of the majority of Scots” became an important argument for the right to define their own belonging in the new situation.

The main issues have been taken into account in this article: 1. Will the referendum conducted in the coming years bring success to the supporters of independence?

The aim of the publication is to present the problems of Scottish independence idea before and after leaving the European Union by the UK.

The article is descriptive by nature and the research method is mainly based on a critical review of the literature and source materials. The system and comparative methods and elements of the institutional-legal method were also used to write the paper.

The analysis is based on a review of available publications, the results of research and analyses, government documents, speeches by Scottish and English politicians, the reports from various institutions and research centres, including Fraser of Allander Institute, and opinion polls on Scottish referendum carried out by various organisations.

First independence referendum in 2014

On October 15, 2012, the First Minister of Scotland Alex Salmond and the British Prime Minister David Cameron signed the ‘Edinburgh Agreement’, which sets out the conditions of a legal and binding referendum on Scottish independence (McCorkindale & McHarg, 2021, p. 35).

The referendum was scheduled for September 18, 2014, and the date was of symbolic significance – the 700th anniversary of the Scot’s victorious battle against the English at Bannockburn (NBC News, 2014). The people of Scotland (and also of England) were divided into two opposing camps, reflecting either pro-independence or pro-unionist attitudes. The first, pro-independence group, proposed the ‘Yes Scotland’ slogan. The second group were the Tories, Labour and Liberal Democrats with the slogan ‘Better Together’ (Ferreira Antunes & Neira Cortizas, 2016, pp. 9–10).

In the document the Scottish independence supporters highlighted also the fact that staying within the UK would stop further Scottish development (*Scotland’s Future. Your Guide to an Independent Scotland*, 2013).

However, the referendum was a defeat for the pro-independence supporters, as 44.7% voted to leave the UK, while 55.3% said they wanted to stay. The turnout was very high, at 84.6%, with 4,283,392 eligible voters casting their votes, making the result binding (*Scotland Decides*, n.d.).

The question asked in the referendum was understandable, and the response was supposed to give a simple answer as to whether Scotland should be independent or not. As Eve Hepburn, Michael Keating and Nicola McEwen note: “Beneath the clarity of the question, however, lay considerable uncertainty about what it meant to be independent and what the consequences of Scottish independence would be” (Hepburn et al., 2021, p. 23).

Indeed, in 2014, independence could have involved a great many challenges for Scotland. The pre-referendum debate focused on three main issues: competences, the welfare system (NHS, pension and healthcare), and the pound (Ferreira Antunes, 2015–2016, pp. 47–48). One of the most important questions in the Scottish independence referendum was the currency arrangement. The Scottish government proposed the use of sterling in a formal monetary union arrangement, which would involve sharing the Bank of England. But during the campaign, the idea of a Scottish/UK currency union was rejected by all three major UK party leaders (Butcher & Livingston, 2021).

Simultaneous exit from the UK and the European Union was also one of the major issues raised in the campaign. Scotland would face the problem of possibly reapplying for membership of European structures after leaving the UK. However, Scots were largely Europhiles and the vision of leaving the European Union was unacceptable to many of them.

Two solutions could have been offered after leaving the UK. Scotland could apply to join as a new Member State (under Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union) or be recognised as the 29th Member State under Article 48 TEU (allowing for a rapid transition) (Keating, 2015, p. 88). The Scottish government proposed to keep the present UK terms of membership, including opt-outs on the Euro, the Schengen free travel area, and Justice and Home Affairs (Ferreira Antunes, 2015–2016, pp. 47–48).

Brexit and Scotland

The UK left the EU on January 31, 2020, and in December 2020, after an 11-month transition period, the UK and the EU were finally able to complete lengthy and complicated negotiations and conclude the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) (European Commission, 2020).

Brexit followed the decision made by the British people in the referendum of June 23, 2016. 51.9% of UK citizens voted to leave the Union.

In the months that followed the Brexit referendum, the Scottish Government emphasised the importance of remaining in the EU single market. If this prospect was ruled out by the UK Government for the UK as a whole, the Scottish Government sought to keep Scotland in the single market or maintain a special status within the EU, but these proposals were rejected by the UK Government for Scotland (Hepburn et al., 2021).

Leaving the European Union meant big changes for economies across the UK as well as Scotland. Projections of the consequences of Brexit for Scotland in the longer term were presented in 2016 by the Fraser of Allander Institute. All modelled scenarios presented by the Institute predicted that Brexit would have a significant negative impact on Scotland's economy. Based on the modelling, it was assumed that in the longer term, reduced levels of trade would result in Scottish GDP being between 2% and 5% lower than if the UK remained in the EU. These assumptions forecast that the negative impact of leaving the European Union would still be less than for the UK as a whole. All the modulated scenarios predicted that Brexit would have a significant negative impact on Scotland's economy (Fraser of Allander Institute, 2016).

Before the referendum on leaving the EU, Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon campaigned for a 'Remain vote in the EU', arguing that such a decision was best for Scotland and the UK as a whole. She also warned against Scotland "being dragged out of the EU against its will" (Leith & Sim, 2020, p. 355).

And indeed Scots voted against Brexit in the referendum of June 23, 2016. As many as 62% of Scots from 32 regions voted to remain in the European Union. The turnout was very high, as 67.2% of the Scottish voting population cast their vote (BBC News, 2021).

Such strong opposition to Brexit was probably a consequence of the fact that membership of the European Union was beneficial to Scots in very many ways. First of all, Scots benefited from the free movement of people and goods, while the immigration of citizens from Central and Eastern Europe halted the trend of the country's declining population, which even started to increase after 2004 (Scottish Government, 2018).

In addition, Scotland, according to supporters of continued EU membership, has strong and beneficial economic links with the Union. These argument has become an important part of the campaign for a new referendum on Scottish independence. Table 1 shows the results of the Scottish vote in both the 2014 and Brexit referendum.

Table 1. Vote for EU and Independence in Scotland 2014–2016

	Yes Independence	No Independence	Total
Remain EU	27	34	61
Leave EU	17	21	38
Total	44	55	

Source: McCrone & Keating, 2021.

What is apparent here, as David McCrone and Michael Keating note, is that the relationship between voting ‘Yes’ and staying in the European Union is not so obvious. However, after 2016 there was a movement towards independence among Europhiles and a movement against independence among Eurosceptics (McCrone & Keating, 2021, p. 15).

The second Scottish referendum?

The results of the referendum on Brexit clearly showed that Scots were in favour of staying in the European Union, which triggered an immediate reaction from the authorities in Edinburgh. Then First Minister of Scotland and Chair of the Scottish National Party Nicola Sturgeon stressed that Scotland did not agree to leave the Union and this, in her opinion, should be taken into account by the British Government.

In March 2017, Nicola Sturgeon also announced that given the circumstances it was necessary to hold another referendum on Scotland’s separation from the UK. She announced the intention to seek approval for a Section 30 order enabling an independence referendum (Torrance, 2017).

The First Minister identified the period between autumn 2018 and spring 2019 as the most convenient date for a Scottish independence referendum (Stone, 2017). The 2014 referendum in which Scots voted to remain in the UK had lost its binding force, as it would be necessary to ask people of Scotland whether it would not be more attractive for them to become an independent state in the new situation where the UK is no longer part of the European Union. A strong argument according to the First Minister of Scotland was that during the 2014 vote, Scots did not know that two years later the British would decide to leave the European Union (Morphet, 2017, p. 23).

According to some analysts, many Scots voted against leaving the UK because independence for Scotland could be the same as leaving the EU at the same time.

This, as mentioned above, would mean that Scotland would have to reapply for EU membership and would not necessarily be successful.

The lack of legislation on this matter was a significant brake on many Scots' support for the 'Yes Scotland' idea promoted by independence supporters.

However, immediately after this declaration, on March 16, 2017, Prime Minister Theresa May said that "now is not the time for a second referendum on Scottish independence". The then British Prime Minister declared that the British Government would not agree to it, as a referendum in Scotland could damage the stability of the United Kingdom at such a complicated time as the implementation of procedures for the country's exit from the European Union (BBC News, 2017). After the referendum on leaving the European Union, support for the idea of independence increased significantly, as shown in Figure 1.

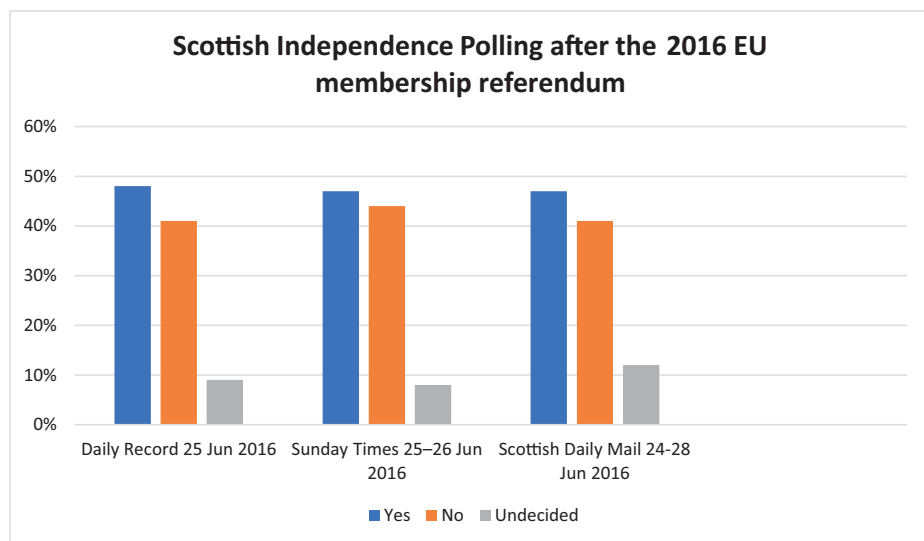


Figure 1

Sources: Daily Record, Sunday Times, Scottish Daily Mail.

Before the 2019 UK Parliamentary elections, the issue of Scottish independence had emerged with greater intensity. In its election manifesto *Stronger for Scotland*, the SNP called again for a second independence referendum: "We have a clear mandate to deliver a new referendum on becoming an independent country" (SNP 2019 Manifesto, 2019, p. 4). There was also once again reference to Brexit and the negative decision of the Scottish people to leave the EU: "Scotland voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU but has been completely ignored by Westminster and our interests

have been trampled over throughout the entire process. This is unacceptable". This issue was a strong argument for holding another referendum.

The manifesto also contains many criticisms of the consequences of leaving the European Union: "Brexit has destroyed the idea of the United Kingdom as a partnership of equals" (SNP 2019 Manifesto, 2019, p. 4). After the SNP won 48 out of 59 seats for Scotland in the British Parliament, Nicola Sturgeon asked Prime Minister Boris Johnson for the right to hold another referendum. However, Boris Johnson responded that the 2014 referendum was an opportunity for a generation and denied the possibility of a second referendum with the words: "I cannot agree to any request for a transfer of power that would lead to further independence referendums" (The Prime Minister Boris Jonson Letter to Nicola Sturgeon, 2020).

The Scottish Government published the document *Scotland's Right to Choose: Putting Scotland's Future in Scotland's Hand* (Scottish Government, 2019), which states that: "The Scottish Government has therefore prepared the legal provisions that, in its view, would best give effect to both the principle that it is for the Scottish Parliament to determine whether and when any vote on Scottish independence is held, and give effect to the principle that should the people of Scotland vote in a referendum for independence, Scotland would have the right to prepare itself for independence" (Scottish Government, 2019).

Scottish independence once again came to the centre of political debate in 2021 during May's Scottish Parliament election campaign. The election brought another decisive victory for the pro-independence majority. The SNP won 64 seats and the Greens 8 seats making a total of 72 seats in the 129-seat Scottish Parliament (Sim, 2021).

The Scottish Government, after such a good result for pro-independence supporters, considered that such a majority gave an "iron-clad mandate" for a second referendum. However, the UK government still believed that "now is not the time" for it. In September 2021, Secretary of State for Scotland Alister Jack also suggested that the referendum should only take place when polls show 60% Scottish support for the event.

Under the rules set out in the Scotland Act 1998, the Scottish Parliament (Holyrood) cannot legislate on 'reserved' matters, including "the Union of the Kingdoms of Scotland and England". Thus Holyrood is unable to legislate on 'reserved matters', which are the responsibility of the UK Parliament. Paragraph 1(b) of schedule 5 of the Scotland Act 1998 states that "the Union of the Kingdoms of Scotland and England" is a reserved matter. This provision means that the Scottish Parliament cannot hold a referendum on independence unless it has the consent of Westminster.

In 2014, Scotland had the power to hold a referendum under the 2012 agreement (Torrance, 2019).

A state has the possibility to become independent if the parent state within which it is located gives its consent (or at least acquiesces) in accordance with constitutional requirements or through a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI). However, a unilateral declaration of independence is a less certain route as it lacks formal recognition by other sovereign states, including the parent state. “As a matter of law, a referendum is not a required part of the process of becoming independent” but “the House of Lords Constitution Committee in its 2010 report on Referendums in the United Kingdom also took the view that it was at least appropriate for a referendum to be held on questions of secession by any of the nations of the UK from the Union” (McCorkindale & McHarg, 2021, pp. 36–37).

Challenges for Scotland in the case of independence

Scotland's independence has numerous economic, political and legal dimensions, and each of them presents a number of challenges. One of the most important will be Scotland's independence from the rest of the UK, which is by far Scotland's largest trading partner. Scotland trades significantly more with the UK than with the European Union (four times more). It has been noted that even if Scotland ceased to be part of the UK, there are a number of factors that will favour mutual trade relations – they are neighbours and share a common language. According to analysts, the combination of Scottish independence and Brexit would significantly reduce per capita income, with the negative impact of independence being two to three times greater than Brexit. Independence would create borders between Scotland and the rest of the UK (rUK). According to research, the existence of borders has a significant restrictive effect on trade. If Scotland gains independence but remains in the Common Market, trade with the UK will fall anyway due to the new border. If Scotland remains in the UK, Scotland's per capita income will fall by 2% due to Brexit. However, after independence, and even with a continuing relationship with the rest of the UK, the loss from independence will be two to three times greater than from Brexit alone. Another difficulty with independence arises in relation to Scotland's eventual membership of the European Union. In that case, according to the researchers, re-joining the EU will not be able to compensate for the revenue lost through independence. The net effect according to the researchers will be positive, with +0.2% of income per capita in the low trade costs case and +1.1% in the high trade cost case. Re-membership of the EU would provide a boost

to incomes, but not enough to compensate for the losses incurred by leaving the UK (Huang, Sampson, & Schneider, 2021).

However, this also raises the very important question of whether Scotland could rejoin the EU after leaving the UK, or be part of the European Economic Area like Norway? It is possible that if Scotland were to become independent in the next few years, its laws and regulations would still be close to those in the European Union. Indeed, 47 years of membership as part of the United Kingdom meant that Scotland aligned many laws and rules with those of the Union. Such an argument could be one of the stronger ones for future re-membership and would avoid the lengthy process that all future members have to go through (Hughes, 2021, p. 173).

Many academics and politicians are positive about the readmission of an independent Scotland into the EU (Harris, 2021).

Michael Keating, however, acknowledged that many of the member states may block Scotland's membership. One of these states, according to the researcher, could be Spain, which could fear Scottish independence as a model for Catalans or Basques who also seek independence (Keating, 2016). Other states could also see a threat to their stability in Scottish independence. The fact is that separatist tendencies are on the increase in many parts of Europe.

Moreover, independent Scotland would have to negotiate many new agreements with various international organisations, not only with the European Union.

The currency used to make payments within Scotland could also be a significant problem. An independent Scotland would have to decide on the currency to be used within its territory as well as the entire monetary and fiscal policies. After all, the currency, its type and stability are of great importance to the competitiveness of exports and the price of imported goods (Peat, 2021, p. 116).

Both at the time of the first referendum in 2014 and now, there are three possible currency choices for an independent Scotland: a) continuing to use sterling, b) adopting the euro, c) creating a new Scottish currency (Peat, 2021, p. 117). There are challenges in choosing any of them.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced that, being a member of the European Union, Scotland would not adopt the euro. However, the UK authorities have made it clear that, after leaving the UK, Scots would not be allowed to use sterling as a means of payment.

The oil industry has become the largest branch of the Scottish economy. The oil and gas sector generates 8% of all jobs in Scotland. However, oil revenues have now started to decline significantly. This issue has therefore ceased to be a compelling argument for independence. In the 2013 White Paper, it was predicted that revenues would increase and amount to between £7 billion and £8 billion annually. However,

revenues are currently minimal. They are forecast not to exceed £1 billion in the foreseeable future (Graeme, 2021).

The difficulties outlined above may discourage Scots from advocating both an independence referendum and support for independence at the ballot box. Current polls show that the idea of independence does not have sufficient support among the people of Scotland, as shown in Figure 2.

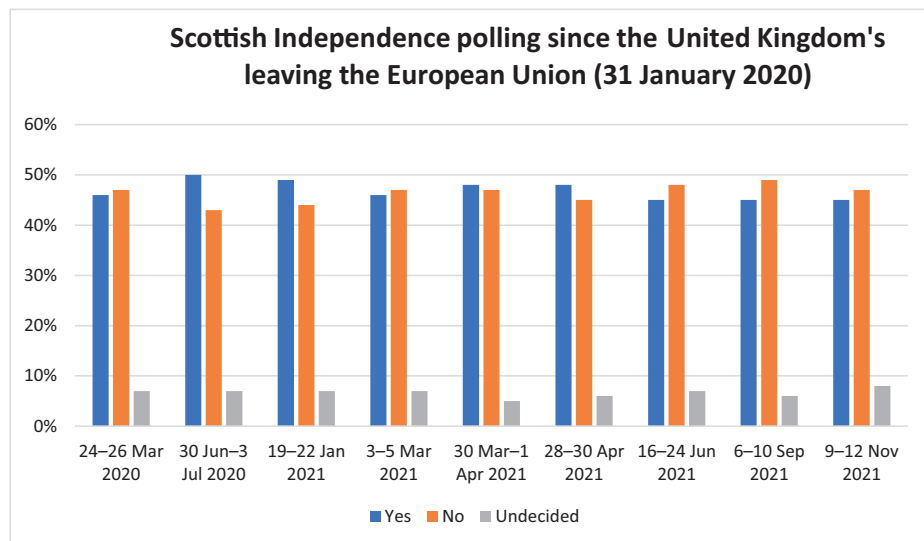


Figure 2

Source: Sunday Times.

However, it is worth noting that support for the idea of independence can change under a variety of factors. One of these was Brexit. The increase in support for separation from the UK was also sharply higher in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out. The current situation is not conducive to an independence referendum, also due to the pandemic. Nicola Sturgeon stressed in her May 2021 election manifesto that the SNP would of course seek a referendum, but only after “the COVID crisis has passed” (*Scotland’s Future*, 2021).

In September 2021, Sturgeon admitted that for a referendum campaign it was crucial that there was “an overall environment in the country where people are not in their day-to-day lives being asked to limit or restrict their behaviour”. She said that: “This is not just about safety of polling stations. It is about making sure that as a country faces a big, important decision about its future, it’s able to focus on that properly and it doesn’t have looming over COVID crisis” (London Daily, 2021).

Conclusions

Modern Scotland is a fast-growing region with a thriving economy with strengths in tourism, energy, and financial services. It also has a world-class university sector, it is rich in natural resources, and can count on trusted institutions (Graeme, 2021). Scotland has been part of the United Kingdom since the union in 1707, but Scots have never succumbed to the process of assimilation and have retained a sense of separateness. Nor do most Scots accept the perennial English domination over them, which began well before the union.

Over the centuries, Scotland has made several attempts at independence from Britain, but all have failed. It was not until the discovery of oil and gas deposits in the North Sea in the 1970s that Scots hoped to be able to gain independence from wealthier England. However, the defeat of independence supporters after the 2014 referendum put the brakes on Scottish independence aspirations.

Nonetheless, Brexit became a compelling argument for independence supporters to hold a new referendum. Scots wanted to remain part of the European Union, as shown by the Brexit referendum results mentioned earlier in the article, and Scotland itself clearly benefited from membership of the European Union.

London authorities, however, are strongly opposed to Scotland's secession process, which is based on a desire to maintain the unity and stability of the United Kingdom.

It is worth noting that the people of Scotland were asked to express their opinion in two very important referendums, and in both of them they voted in favour of the existing status quo. In both cases, Scots did not want to leave the structures in which they operated.

Yet although the majority of Scots were in favour of remaining in the European Union, polls show that there is currently not enough support for independence among Scots. It is therefore very likely that the referendum in favour of Scotland's secession from UK would fail for its supporters.

The renewed defeat of the independence idea in the referendum could unfortunately provide a compelling argument to the authorities in London that Scots have twice voted to remain within the United Kingdom. The failure of the independence referendum would therefore probably close the road to Scottish independence for many years.

However, regardless of the difficulties that independence may entail, and regardless of whether support for the idea of independence shows up in the polls, Scots are still deeply engaged to this idea. To conclude, the words of former First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon, who stated in September 2021: "I hope

the Scottish and UK governments can reach agreement, as we did in 2014, to allow the democratic wishes of the people of Scotland to be heard and respected” (Harwood-Baynes, 2021).

Nicola Sturgeon served as First Minister of Scotland until February 15, 2023, when she resigned, announcing it at a press conference in Edinburgh. Sturgeon was a staunch advocate of independence. The question then arose as to whether Scotland would continue to fight for independence under a new leader? After Sturgeon resigned, the position of First Minister was taken by Humza Yousaf, who supported the idea of a referendum on Scottish independence. During the SNP conference in June 2023, Yousaf also made it clear that the focus should be on Scottish independence before the next general election. He also announced that if the SNP wins the election again, he would seek the UK government’s approval to hold a second referendum on Scottish independence. However, he stressed that the only way to independence is through a “legitimate and democratic process”. Yousaf also announced that the election campaign would focus on “opportunities of independence” (Sim, 2023). However, on May 7, 2024, after less than a year as First Minister, Humza Yousaf resigned from his position. The reason for his departure was the breaking of an agreement with the Scottish Greens. He was succeeded by SNP politician John Swinney, who like his predecessors supports the idea of independence.

It therefore appears that the SNP under its new leader will continue to pursue Scottish independence. This idea, despite the departure of its great advocate Nicola Sturgeon, is still an important aspect of Scottish politics. However, one of the crucial issues that could, of course, determine the success for independence is social support. Surveys show that the majority of Scots do not currently approve Scotland’s separation from the UK. In September 2024, 56% of Scots said ‘No’ to Scottish independence (Statista, 2024). Furthermore, the SNP lost as many as 39 seats in the UK parliamentary elections, showing that it is now losing public support. Its position on the Scottish political scene is also under threat. In the next Holyrood election it will have to compete with the pro-union Scottish Labour Party. John Swinney, while supporting the idea of independence, however, acknowledged that: “When we boost support for independence we will be able to deliver independence” (BBC, 2024). Although there is no overwhelming support for independence among Scots and a referendum would arguably be a defeat for its supporters, there is no denying that the idea is still an important part of the political discussion in Scotland.

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