

Scottish independence is not desired by all

Questions over the nature of a Scottish state are irrelevant as the clamour for independence is not as strong as Salmond thinks

By [Gareth Tagger](#)

Saturday 28 January 2012

As details begin to emerge about Alex Salmond's long promised referendum on Scottish Independence, the political debate has started to heat up. Faced with the break-up of a union that stretches back to 1707, politicians have begun to argue over everything from the site of Britain's nuclear submarines to the division of the UK national debt.

Perhaps they shouldn't worry. According to a YouGov poll conducted in May 2007, Scottish support for Independence remains low, at 28% – with 57% against the idea. Votes for the SNP in Holyrood elections don't seem to have translated into votes for Independence. Recent polls suggest that enthusiasm for the proposal is actually higher in England, with support reaching as high as 43%.

Critics of the SNP argue that this is because Scots know what a good deal they get from the current system; free university education, free personal care for the elderly and free NHS prescriptions all come at the expense of English taxpayers. Salmond argues that an independent Scotland could sustain this high public spending using income from their North Sea oil, but this would not be sustainable. Revenue and production are set to fall over the coming years, leaving the Scottish economy dangerously reliant on the financial services sector.

An independent Scotland would obviously inherit their fair share of the UK's budget deficit. According to the Scottish administration's own Government Expenditure and Revenue Exercise, in 2009-10, this would be around £14.9 billion, 13.4 per cent of GDP. When the oil runs out, Scotland will be left with a giant financial black hole.

After Independence, Scotland would be forced to reapply for EU membership. Would they keep the Pound, or join the Euro? Neither looks like a good option. Keeping the Pound would surely undermine Scotland's claim to economic independence. And you only have to look to Portugal, Ireland and Greece to see the dangers of being a small, peripheral Eurozone country.

The SNP's promise that an independent Scottish nation would be a "beacon of fairness" rings hollow if you look at the economics. But the more emotive arguments are no more compelling – crude nationalism isn't going to rally the Scottish people behind the cause of independence. Nor is the historical argument convincing; events that happened over 300 years ago have little relevance to modern politics. And whilst no one can deny that Scotland has an independent, unique and vibrant culture, that won't help them pay their way in the world.

Scottish independence is neither likely, nor a good idea. It's no wonder Alex Salmond wants the referendum delayed until 2014.



15 comments

Alan McGrane

28 Jan '12 at 5:00 pm

Using a 5 year old opinion poll? What amateur wrote this? The LATEST poll conducted by New Statesman, if you had bothered to do any research, shows support for independence at 44%, with 45% against.

The rest of the article isn't even worth commenting on, it reads like a Daiy Mail article generator.

 Report

steph

28 Jan '12 at 5:00 pm

Poor, lazy journalism at its best. Why not try resaerching your economic argument before repeating the Scottish are subsidised by the English myth. try researching the GERS report or even better the 'top secret' (or was at least for 30 years thanks to labour/tory gov) McCrone report for Scotland true wealth. There is no such thing as the english taxpayers money!! that would be UK taxpayers which includes wales, NI, oh and us Scots. We have those freebies you mention because our gov the SNP chooses to spend money from the scots block grant aka pocket money on the Scottish NHS, elderly etc maybe if you would like that to you could vote for a party that offers those benefits in the rest of the UK!! Well it would help i suppose if there was a party willing to offer that.

 Report

Venerable John

28 Jan '12 at 5:22 pm

This article is very silly. Has the author of this article only just caught onto this whole debate? You're quoting a poll that's 5 years out of date, and only quoting only one side of another recent one to fit your own argument. If this is the quality of the insight we're going to get into this issue over the next two years then we might as well just make a purely emotional decision.

 Report

Stuart

28 Jan '12 at 6:01 pm

Clearly the author has not done their research. Heck, they're even quoting from a poll conducted FIVE YEARS AGO! Support has risen quite a bit since then (latest polls putting Independence support at 40%).

I would highly recommend that the author actually do some research before writing articles in the future. It's clear that they do not know what they're writing about, and perhaps a career change could be beneficial as well. The Labour Party might need a new leader in a few months.

 Report

gia

28 Jan '12 at 6:16 pm

no.....scottish independence,long live the uk

 Report

Concerned Scot

28 Jan '12 at 7:08 pm

Agreed. See another concerned Scot's petition on the e-petition site at:

<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/15998>

 Report

douglas

28 Jan '12 at 8:13 pm

You really don't understand the scots wishes or feelings, do you!

[Report](#)

Jay

28 Jan '12 at 8:37 pm

this newspaper has it wrong there were other polls of scottish independence during 2010 - 2012 which were higher than those shown in this newspaper and scotland has plenty of green power to survive. Plenty of other counties share currency why not england and scotland

[Report](#)

David Adamson

28 Jan '12 at 9:22 pm

What a horribly uninformed and misguided article.

Using polls from 5 years ago to judge support in 2012? Nonsense. The latest poll, in the telegraph this week, using the question in the Scottish Government consultation paper found that over 50% o Scots responded with a 'yes' vote to the question.

As for the 'funded by English taxpayers' - that's utter lies. Even using the facts you've listed - for ONE year- that deficit as a %GDP is lower than that of the UK governments showing a better financial position. Not to mention that Scotland contributes 9.4% of taxes and receives 9.2% of expenditure- a higher contribution to expenditure ratio was present the previous years. For 4 of the past 6 years Scotland has had a budget surplus- the UK government hasn't had a surplus in over a decade, and the two years there wasn't a surplus the deficit was smaller as a %GDP lower than that of the UK.

Through your logic the UK couldn't survive as it 'doesn't pay it's way in the world'.

As for Europe, senior EU lawyers have stated that both Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom would be treated as successor nations and required to renegotiate their treaty's, not be forced to reapply.

Anyway- if Scotland's forced to then so would the rest of the UK and that's simply not going to happen.

You only have to look to Norway to see what an oil rich northern nation can become- if oil is included Scotland would have the 6th Largest GDP in the World!!!

No wonder Independence support is rising- patronising and misinformed prejudicial individuals like yourself are doing a world of good. I would advise you to give up on a carer in politics or journalism, if this is the type of work you intend to produce.

[Report](#)

Davie Ferguson

28 Jan '12 at 9:23 pm

Wondering why you thought a poll of nearly 5 years ago was appropriate. All polls within the last month indicate the Yes vote running neck & neck with the no vote....here's to 2014!!

[Report](#)

Garve

28 Jan '12 at 10:20 pm

You quote a YouGov poll from 2007. Was the question phrased "thinking about 2012, will you then be in favour of Scottish Independence?" More recent polls vary wildly, from 30% in favour to parity between the options. With the SNP's noted machine behind the campaign, perhaps it is time to worry.

You state with certainty the following: Scotland would have to reapply to join the EU; oil revenue will fall;

spending is at the expense of English taxpayers.

The EU question is unclear – would both successor states need to reapply, would both automatically be members? The fact that all UK citizens are already citizens of the EU makes it likely that EU membership continues.

As for oil, whilst production may be falling, revenues are also a function of price which although volatile is generally rising.

The GERS report you quote shows quite clearly that in recent years Scottish taxes have subsidised the rest of the UK's taxpayers, not the other way round.

Scottish independence IS likely, and to my mind IS a good idea.

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TigerTim

29 Jan '12 at 11:24 am

@ David Adamson

'if oil is included Scotland would have the 6th Largest GDP in the World!!!'

You have got to be on a windup mate? The UK's North Sea Oil revenue equates to just over £11b per year, and is falling. Now Scottish GDP figures are a little hazy due to its complex ties with the rest of the United Kingdom, but good old wikipedia estimates 2009 GDP as £143b. 'Including' North Sea then gives a total GDP of £154b, which is roughly equivalent to Peru, just behind Algeria, and some 16x less than 5th place France. Not bad for a country of just over 5 Million, but you guys have got to stop blowing the Oil revenues out of all proportion.

[▲ Report](#)

J

29 Jan '12 at 2:43 pm

Just to stick up for the pro-keeping-the-union-side: figures from the past few years, however old or recent they may be, only give a vague idea of what would be in store for Scotland. Any decision to break-off from the UK will have effects for centuries to come, not just until the next GDP figures are released.

Also, evidence such as new oil fields around South America becoming economically viable to explore, coupled with the uncertainty over how long North Sea oil will last, are the kinds of issues that make the debate less certain if you want to base the whole reason to split on oil.

Looking at any figures for Scotland's wealth as part of or separate to the UK gives an an idea of what could happen, but the debate should go much further and deeper than that. Just arguing over whether Scotland could survive economically in the short-term is pointless. The four constituent nations of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland have strong cultural and historical ties that date back over centuries. As nations we have together experienced a heck of a lot; some good, some bad, but we are part of each other's history.

Being from Northern Ireland, I have experienced the many arguments over who should be part of what union etc. I am also an Ulster-Scot, and so look upon the Scottish as my nearest neighbours in the Union. I think that the UK would be a much poorer one without Scotland, and Scotland would be much poorer outside the UK, economically, politically and culturally.

Having said all that, I would still fully back the idea of more powers to Scotland, as I would to Northern Ireland and Wales. After all, it would simply be replicating the position of Northern Ireland from the 1920's through to the 1970's. That option though shouldn't be in the first referendum. It should be left until after a referendum on full independence, as currently Salmond seems to be trying his best to muddy the

situation to try and get the best result for himself, not Scotland.

ps. Seeing as it has become almost tradition for anyone commenting on an article on Nouse to slag it off and say how poor it is, I would just like to say that if you think it's so bad (and sometimes it isn't great), go and do something about it, like joining or writing for Nouse, rather than grandstanding other people's work. After all, these are your fellow students, not all-out professionals!

[▲ Report](#)

Garve

29 Jan '12 at 8:36 pm

@TigerTim

6th largest GDP per capita is what he should have said.

[▲ Report](#)

From an outside perspective

31 Jan '12 at 5:29 am

I'm amazed that this debate so often gets bogged down in these tired economic arguments. Perhaps the Scots feel that a government based 400 miles away and led by a party that won one seat in Scotland at the general election doesn't have the best interests of Scots at heart? Maybe they want to live in a country where Scottish soldiers are not to send to fight and die in wars that most of their MPs voted against? Maybe they want a relationship with Europe that isn't dictated by Daily Mail reading little Englanders in the south? Or just maybe they are a proud and ancient people who won't be voting yes because they hate all the English or because they hope to make a quick £500 but because they want to join the other free nations of Europe and decide their future for themselves.

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