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**Scots Stay Put**

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Scottish voters have said no to independence, choosing to stay “better together” in the UK. For officials in Brussels, it was a relief. There was no precedent created, and answers to uncomfortable questions raised by independence movements in Catalonia, Wallonia, even Bavaria, were not forced.

Was this a vote about dormant nationalism? Are Scots tired of British-imposed austerity? Would a Norway style, oil-funded Sovereign Wealth Fund pave the way for a Nordic model? Create a fairer society? Would it print its own money, keep the British pound, or use the euro? Would the Bank of England act as a lender of last resort for Scottish banks? And what are the implications of a peaceful separation within the European project?

Paul Krugman looked at the economic implications and warned of doomsday consequences, should Scotland keep the British currency without a political union. His predictions were based on the platform of the Scottish National Party (SNP), which promised to keep the sterling. However, Scottish leaders also envisioned EU membership, and it’s hard to imagine that Scotland would have gotten the same currency opt-outs that Britain received. Euractiv quoted an unnamed source from the European Socialist and Democrats threatening to veto a Scottish EU membership without the adoption of the euro.

George Friedman from Stratfor is convinced that Scotland’s drive for independence was and is about Scottish nationalism. Scots and English hated each other prior to 1707 and that mutual distrust, claims Friedman, has persisted.

The independence debate was polarized along socio-economic lines, in a country with a high rate of income inequality. Pro-independence parties blamed UK government policies for increasing inequality, and argued that only independence will narrow the gap between rich and poor. Over 65% of Scots in most deprived areas polled pro-independence. Most yes votes came from Glasgow and the surrounding areas, which were hardest hit by deindustrialization and loss of jobs in shipbuilding and manufacturing.

**Too Late for Going it Alone**

SNP leaders had promised better income distribution, a greener Scotland, tuition-free schooling, free health care and social welfare programs, all paid for by North Sea oil. However, North Sea oil tycoon Ian Wood estimates that the North Sea oil reserves are in decline with only 16-24 billion barrels left.

The vote comes too late also in terms of national identity awareness. Whether identity perceptions were influenced by the campaign or not, more Scots identify today as British than in the past. 80% of people in Scotland saw themselves as Scottish in 2000 as opposed to only 13% who considered themselves British. In 2014, only 65% identified themselves as Scottish and 23% as British, according to social research agency Scotcen.

In an arrangement called “devolution,” Scotland has a Parliament with limited powers in Holyrood, Edinburgh, since 1999. To lure voters to the “better together” camp, the leaders of UK’s largest parties, David Cameron (Tories), Ed Miliband (Labour), and Nick Clegg (Liberal Democrats) vowed to return to Holyrood more powers over taxes, spending, and welfare. After the voting results were published, Cameron announced the appointment of Lord Smith of Kelvin to oversee the process of transferring further powers to the Scottish Parliament.
The political affinities in Scotland lean left and are pro-European. Since the 90s, the SNP and Labor got the highest percentage of the vote at every election in Scotland (UK, Scottish, or European elections), keeping the Tories well below 20%. UKIP, which gained so much in the UK, garnered only 10.5% of the Scottish vote.

Was Scottish nationalism a means to end austerity, or austerity a means for nationalism? Most of those who voted yes wanted to end their economic misery. Scotland has chosen to stay put in the UK and by doing so, it has gained more economic and political power.

EuroPoint: For Europe, questions remain: Can a newly independent region from a EU member state retain EU membership? What are the independence movements in Catalonia, Wallonia, and Bavaria fighting for? Catalonia’s president envisions a federal Europe with seventy or more member states; he wants more power for Catalonia and less for Spain.