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Article

Why Scotland Should Be Independent: Historical Context, European Identity, Future Prosperity, and Unique Citizenship Challenges

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Abstract: This article explores the multifaceted argument for Scottish independence, emphasizing Scotland's historical context, cultural identity, and the potential benefits of rejoining the European Union (EU). It begins with a historical overview, tracing Scotland's deep roots in independence and its eventual union with England in 1707, which, despite economic benefits, subordinated Scottish interests to those of England. The article argues that Scotland's distinct identity and ongoing desire for autonomy justify a renewed push for independence. Reuniting with Europe is presented as a key advantage, offering Scotland access to the EU's single market, financial support, and a platform for political influence. Additionally, independence would empower Scotland to harness its renewable energy resources, develop tailored economic policies, and uphold its tradition of social justice. However, the article also acknowledges the unique challenges Scotland faces, particularly in formulating citizenship policies amidst the legacy of English imperialism. Ultimately, the article posits that despite these challenges, independence offers Scotland a path to realizing its full potential as a sovereign nation committed to democracy, equality, and cooperation.

Keywords: Scottish independence; European Union; cultural identity; self-governance; Acts of Union; economic autonomy; renewable energy; social justice; citizenship challenges; Scottish history

Section 1. Introduction

The question of Scottish independence has been a contentious issue for centuries, with the 2014 referendum bringing it to the forefront of political discourse. While the referendum resulted in a majority vote against independence, the debate has not subsided. This article argues that Scotland should be independent, given its rich history, distinct cultural identity, and the advantages of reuniting with Europe, a continent with which it shares a deep affinity and influence. Additionally, this article will explore the unique challenges Scotland faces in applying the same citizenship rules as the majority of European countries, due to England's vast imperialism and nefarious connections with non-democratic countries.

Section 1. Historical Context of Scottish Independence

Section 1.1 Ancient Roots and Medieval Kingdom

Scotland's history is deeply rooted in independence and self-governance. The Kingdom of Scotland emerged in the early Middle Ages, with its own monarchy, legal system, and cultural traditions. The Declaration of Arbroath in 1320, a letter to Pope John XXII, asserted Scotland's independence and sovereignty, *stating that the Scots would not be subject to any other authority*. This document has been hailed as one of the most important historical declarations of national independence (Devine, 2016).

Section 1.2. Union with England

The Acts of Union in 1707 merged the Kingdom of Scotland with the Kingdom of England, creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain. While the union brought economic benefits and stability, it also led to the subordination of Scottish interests to those of England. Over the centuries, Scotland has maintained a distinct identity and a desire for greater autonomy, which has been reflected in various political movements and cultural expressions.

In 1999, the Scottish Parliament was re-established after a referendum in 1979, marking a significant step towards greater self-governance (Keating, 2009). The Scottish Parliament has since gained more powers through the Scotland Acts of 2012 and 2016, including control over taxation, welfare, and certain aspects of the legal system (Scottish Parliament, 2019). However, many Scots believe that full independence is necessary to fully realize Scotland's potential and address its unique needs (Mitchell, 2014).

Section 1.3 Advantages of Reuniting with Europe

Cultural and Historical Ties

Scotland has strong cultural and historical ties with Europe, dating back to the Middle Ages. Scottish scholars, merchants, and diplomats have played significant roles in European affairs, and Scotland has been influenced by European ideas, arts, and sciences. Reuniting with Europe would strengthen these ties and allow Scotland to fully participate in the cultural and intellectual life of the continent (McCrone, 2017).

Membership in the European Union (EU) would provide Scotland with access to the single market, one of the largest and most dynamic economic zones in the world (European Union, 2020). This would facilitate trade, investment, and economic growth, benefiting Scottish businesses and consumers. Additionally, EU membership would provide Scotland with access to structural funds, research grants, and other forms of financial support, which could be used to address regional disparities and promote economic development (Scottish Government, 2020a).

As a member of the EU, Scotland would have a seat at the table in European decision-making processes, allowing it to shape policies that affect its interests (Scottish Government, 2020b). Scotland would be able to participate in the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, and other EU institutions, providing it with a voice in matters such as trade, environmental protection, and social policy. This political influence would enable Scotland to advance its priorities and contribute to the development of a more just and sustainable Europe (Kymlicka, 1995).

The EU has established high standards for social and environmental protection, which have been incorporated into Scottish law. Membership in the EU would ensure that these standards are maintained and enforced, protecting the rights of Scottish citizens and the environment. Additionally, the EU provides a framework for cooperation on issues such as climate change, renewable energy, and sustainable development, which are of critical importance to Scotland (Soysal, 1994).

Section 2. Discussion

Section 2.1 Future Prosperity and Independence

Economic Potential

Scotland has a diverse and dynamic economy, with strengths in sectors such as finance, energy, technology, and tourism. Independence would allow Scotland to tailor its economic policies to its specific needs and priorities, promoting growth and innovation. For example, *Scotland could develop a more progressive tax system*, invest in strategic industries, and attract foreign investment through targeted incentives (Joppke, 2010).

Renewable Energy and Sustainability

Scotland is recognized as a global leader in renewable energy, boasting abundant resources in wind, hydro, and tidal power. In 2020, renewable sources generated the equivalent of 97.4% of Scotland's gross electricity consumption, marking significant progress toward a sustainable energy system (Scottish Government, 2021). Independence would enable Scotland to fully harness these resources, reduce its dependence on fossil fuels, and make substantial contributions to the global fight against climate change.

Offshore Wind Energy

Scotland's geographical location provides ideal conditions for offshore wind energy. The North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean offer strong and consistent wind speeds, making them prime locations for wind farms. Projects like the Moray East Offshore Wind Farm, with a capacity of 950 MW, demonstrate Scotland's commitment to expanding this sector (Moray East, 2021). Independence would allow Scotland to further invest in offshore wind technology, potentially attracting international investment and positioning itself as a leader in renewable energy.

Tidal and Wave Energy

With its extensive coastline and powerful tides, Scotland has significant potential for tidal and wave energy generation. The European Marine Energy Centre (EMEC) in Orkney is a world-leading facility for testing and developing marine energy technologies (EMEC, 2022). By focusing on these emerging technologies, Scotland could become a global hub for marine renewable energy, fostering innovation and creating high-skilled jobs in rural and coastal communities.

Hydropower

Hydropower has been a cornerstone of Scotland's renewable energy portfolio for decades. The nation's mountainous terrain and high rainfall make it well-suited for hydroelectric power generation. Facilities like the Cruachan Power Station, a pumped-storage hydroelectric plant, play a crucial role in balancing the grid and storing excess energy (Drax Group, 2020). Investing further in hydropower infrastructure could enhance energy security and storage capacity.

Economic and Social Benefits

Developing the renewable energy sector offers significant economic advantages. The industry supports thousands of jobs and contributes substantially to the economy. In 2019, Scotland's renewable energy sector employed approximately 17,700 people (Scottish Renewables, 2019). Independence could enable Scotland to tailor policies that maximize job creation, invest in education and training, and support local supply chains, thereby boosting economic growth and social well-being.

Environmental Impact

By fully exploiting its renewable energy potential, Scotland can make significant strides in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The nation has set an ambitious target to achieve net-zero emissions by 2045, five years ahead of the UK's goal (Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019). An independent Scotland could take more assertive actions in international climate negotiations, reinforcing its commitment to environmental sustainability.

Attracting Investment and Innovation

Scotland's leadership in renewable energy positions it as an attractive destination for investment in green technology. Initiatives like the Low Carbon Infrastructure Transition Programme have already leveraged significant private sector investment (Scottish Government, 2020). Independence

would allow Scotland to create incentives for research and development, further solidifying its role as a pioneer in renewable energy innovation.

Harnessing renewable energy is not just an environmental imperative but also a strategic economic opportunity for Scotland. Independence would provide the autonomy to develop customized policies that fully exploit this potential, fostering a sustainable and prosperous future.

Section 2.2 Scottish Citizenship Paired to European Countries Policies

Implementing a citizenship policy that accounts for the complexities of the Scottish diaspora and the legacy of English imperialism presents significant legal and administrative challenges. Scotland's unique historical context, particularly its association with the British Empire, has led to a widespread diaspora with deep-rooted connections to the nation. Many descendants of Scottish emigrants reside in countries that were once part of the British Empire, such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. However, the legacy of English imperialism has created a situation where immigration privileges are unevenly distributed, often favoring certain groups over others due to historical ties.

Current UK citizenship laws limit the transmission of citizenship by descent to only one generation born abroad, which means that grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Scottish emigrants may not be eligible for citizenship based on ancestry alone (British Nationality Act 1981). If applied to important figures of Britain's History, for example, it would mean that Churchill's or Adam Smith's grandchildren would not be entitled to British citizenship... In contrast, some European countries adopt more inclusive policies. For example, Ireland allows individuals with an Irish-born grandparent to claim citizenship, recognizing the importance of heritage and cultural ties (Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956). This disparity highlights the need for Scotland to consider a more expansive approach to citizenship that reflects its diaspora's genuine connection to the country.

To address these challenges, Scotland would need to develop a robust legal framework and administrative infrastructure. This framework should define clear eligibility criteria, such as descent, residency, and cultural affiliation, while ensuring that the process is fair and non-discriminatory. Establishing procedures for verifying the legitimacy of claims is crucial, which may involve international cooperation to authenticate documents and heritage connections. The administrative infrastructure would require significant investment in personnel training, database creation, and the establishment of offices both domestically and internationally.

Moreover, Scotland must ensure compliance with international law and human rights standards. Adhering to the principles outlined in the European Convention on Nationality would be essential (Council of Europe, 1997). This includes preventing statelessness, prohibiting discrimination, and respecting the rights of individuals in the context of nationality laws. By aligning its policies with international norms, Scotland can promote a just and equitable approach to citizenship.

Addressing the legacy of English imperialism involves acknowledging historical injustices and striving to create a citizenship policy that does not perpetuate past inequalities. This may involve special provisions or pathways to citizenship for groups that were adversely affected by imperial policies. Engaging with diaspora communities to understand their needs and perspectives can also inform a more inclusive and representative citizenship model.

Section 3. Conclusion

The case for Scottish independence is rooted in a rich history of self-governance, a distinct cultural identity, and the advantages of reuniting with Europe. Scotland's historical ties with Europe, combined with the economic, political, and social benefits of EU membership, make a strong argument for independence. Moreover, independence would enable Scotland to fully realize its economic potential, promote renewable energy and sustainability, advance social justice and equality, and engage in international cooperation.

However, Scotland faces unique challenges in applying the same citizenship rules as the majority of European countries, due to the legacy of English imperialism and deleterious connections with non-democratic countries.

While the path to independence may be challenging, the potential benefits are immense. Scotland has the opportunity to shape its own future, build a more just and prosperous society, and contribute to a more united and sustainable Europe. By embracing independence, Scotland can reclaim its place as a proud and sovereign nation, committed to the values of democracy, equality, and cooperation.

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