

Introduction

In 2016, the United Kingdom held a referendum on whether or not they should leave the European Union. The majority voted to Leave, ushering in the age of "Brexit." However, while the UK voted for an exit, Scottish voters had overwel

understand Scottish nationalism and independence

Scottish nationalism began to be politicized, slowly gaining more notice on the political stage. By the 1970s, Scottish nationalism and the Scottish National Party were in the political spotlight and have been considered seriously in British politics since. However, the presence of Scottish nationalism in politics has not led to independence, and it is unclear whether it will anytime soon.

Prior to World War II, there were hints of Scottish nationalism in Scottish politics. As mentioned before, there was the 1320 Declaration of Arbroath, which was perhaps the first sign of Scottish independence becoming politically legitimate. After 1707, Scottish independence moved to the political back burner until the late 1800s. In 1853, the National Association for the Vindication of Scottish Rights was formed, and in 1886, the Scottish Home Rule Association formed. By 1885, Westminster realized that ruling Scotland in the same way as ruling England was not efficient, and the Scottish Office was created to handle purely Scottish affairs. The next stage of political nationalism appeared in 1920, when the Scottish National League was formed, which was the first sign of a political party dedicated to Scottish nationalist interests. Soon after in 1928 there was the National Party of Scotland, and in 1934 saw the birth of the Scottish National Party with the combination of the Scottish Party and the National Party of Scotland. Thus Scottish nationalism and independence began to make its mark on UK politics.

The Scottish National Party, or SNP, is currently the ruling party of the Scottish Parliament, with independence for Scotland being its number one goal. But the SNP has not always had such political power in Scotland, especially prior to there being a devolved Scottish Parliament. Though the SNP has not yet reached its goal of an independent Scotland, Scotland has gained more autonomy, partially due to the actions of the SNP pushing for devolution of

⁷ Murray Stewart Leith and Daniel P. J. Soule, *Political Discourse and National Identity in Scotland*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press (2012), 167.

the UK Parliament. The SNP had rocky beginnings, splitting in 1942, leading to the creation of the Scottish Convention. This cross-party organization created the National Covenant in 1949, a petition to Westminster calling for the creation of a separate Scottish Parliament. Though this Covenant was largely ignored by the UK government, it was a significant stepping stone in pushing Scottish nationalism into British politics as it was one of the first times Scots organized

unionist policies. But because the Conservatives controlled Westminster, they were favored in the rest of the UK, they continued to exercise control over all of Scotland.¹² Thus, began the quest for devolution.

Devolution is a form of decentralization, or transferring power from a high level of government to a lower level of government. In Scotland's case, devolution would have its own parliament, separate from the one in Westminster. By the 1970s, Scotland viewed the UK's centralized policies in a negative light, and decentralization appeared like a positive change. For those who wanted independence, especially the SNP – devolution would have been the first step in attaining this goal. The SNP's political strategy was defined by two things: autonomy and secession. Though the long-term goal was independence from the UK, the short-term goal was for Scotland to gain more political autonomy, which could first be achieved by Scotland gaining its own, separate parliament.¹³ The road to devolution went hand-in-hand with the social, political, and cultural changes Scotland was experiencing during the 1960s and 1970s. During the 1960s, the Labour Party was favored in Scotland more than it was through the rest of the UK, because it was considered less unionist than the Conservative Party and represented those who were economically, which Scotland was compared to the rest of the UK. However, Labour eventually lost favor in Scotland due to its pro-European (in a time where Scotland was Eurosceptic) and nuclear armament policies – a turn of events that the SNP used to its advantage.¹⁴ With both traditional UK political parties losing popularity in Scotland, the Scots had to look for other parties that better represented their interests – and the SNP could provide.¹⁵

¹² Lynch, 444.

¹³ Dardanelli, 272-3.

¹⁴ Lynch, 444.

¹⁵ Leith, 2930.

In the late 1960s, the SNP experienced a boom in popularity. From 1967 to 1969, the SNP did extremely well in local elections, and in 1968 it was the largest political party in Scotland. This positive trend for the SNP began with an election for the Glasgow Pollok seat in 1967. There were three main candidates: Esmond Wright of the Conservatives, Dick Douglas of Labour, and George Leslie of the SNP. Though Wright won, Leslie polled at 28 percent and received significantly more votes than Douglas, revealing that when it came to progressive policies, the SNP was favored over Labour. Douglas himself even eventually switched to the SNP. The other 1967 local elections saw SNP members winning seats, gaining 27 burgh seats and 42 county ones. But the most notable SNP win was that of Winifred "Winnie" Ewing, who became a Member of the UK Parliament for the Hamilton constituency.¹⁶ Her win pushed the SNP into the spotlight of mainstream UK politics and proved that the SNP could achieve as much as their Labour and Conservative counterparts. And if the SNP could reach parliament, perhaps devolution – and even independence – could as well.¹⁷

The SNP wave of the late 60's did not last long, however, by 1969 Labour had recovered¹⁸ –

Scotland's North Sea. The SNP seized this opportunity to campaign with the slogan "It's Scotland's Oil," arguing that the revenue from this oil would only benefit Scotland if Scotland was independent.²¹ After a long history of being economically in England's shadow, Scotland was ready to reap the rewards of its own oil. It is worth noting that, prior to the discovery of oil, poor economic conditions fueled Scottish nationalism as UK policies were ineffective at improving economic conditions. ~~On~~ there was a chance for ~~Scotland~~ to improve its economy without UK assistance, the SNP seized the opportunity. ~~The~~ SNP continued to call for independence and devolution, and ~~February~~ of 1977, the Labour government introduced the Scotland and Wales Bill, which called for a devolution referendum. ~~This~~ bill was defeated, but reintroduced in November. However, this reintroduction included the addition of the Cunningham Amendment, which required 40 percent of the Scottish electorate support the referendum in order for it to pass. The referendum occurred in 1979, with 51.6 percent Yes to devolution – but because this was only 32.9 percent of the Scottish electorate, devolution remained a dream.²²

The 1980s saw the SNP decline again, as the next general election resulted in only two MPs from the party. Despite this, the public still supported devolution. In 1980, the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly was set up, and in 1988 it created the document "A Claim of Right for Scotland," a short statement that declared the Scottish people's desire for its own parliament:

We, gathered as the Scottish Constitutional Convention, do hereby acknowledge the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of Government best suited to their needs, and do hereby declare and pledge that in all our actions and deliberations their interests shall be paramount.

We further declare and pledge that our actions and deliberations shall be directed to the following ends:

To agree a scheme for an Assembly or Parliament for Scotland;

²¹ Harvie, 1847.

²² Leith, 323.

²³ Ibid., 33.

To mobilise Scottish opinion and ensure the approval of the Scottish people for that scheme; and
 To assert the right of the Scottish people to self-determination of that scheme.²⁴

In 1989, Westminster acted once again, and the Scottish Constitutional Convention was created. The only two parties that were strongly against this Convention were the Conservatives and, ironically, the SNP, because they viewed the Convention as dominated by Labour. Despite this, the Convention aided the fight for devolution, and in 1995 *Scotland's Parliament, Scotland's Right* was published, serving as the basis for the structure of the future Scottish Parliament.²⁵ By 1995, the SNP had once again committed itself to devolution, and with the majority of UK parties supporting devolution, a referendum was set up for 1997.

By this time, every major UK party supported devolution except for the Conservatives, and the referendum had a positive outcome. In 1998, the Scotland Act was passed, and by 1999 Scotland had its own Parliament.²⁶ This was a major win for Scottish political nationalism. Not only had Scottish nationalism proved capable of influencing mainstream British politics, but it had also secured a significant increase of autonomy for Scotland. Though still part of the UK,

The 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum

The SNP's number one goal was – and still is – an independent Scotland. With a separate Scottish Parliament, the SNP now has the opportunity to push for this goal. The existence of a Scottish Parliament in Scotland makes it easier for the SNP to compete in elections, as opposed to competing for seats with the rest of the UK, and also allows the SNP to influence daily Scottish concerns. The Scottish Parliament also creates a strengthened sense of a Scottish national identity, uniting the Scottish people and giving them a sense of control over Scottish politics.²⁸ The SNP saw this as an opportunity to promote Scottish independence, and they hoped to reach this goal quickly. However, a referendum on Scottish independence did not occur until 2014, and even then, it failed to bring about an independent Scotland. In addition, the SNP itself failed to gain control of the Scottish Parliament until 2007 and did not gain a majority government until 2011. It became clear that, despite the creation of a Scottish Parliament and the influence of the SNP, Scottish independence was not a given. Why? To find the answer, one must first look more closely at the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum.

The SNP is the primary political party in Scotland that has promoted independence for Scotland, but its strategy for independence has changed over time. Today, in order for Scotland to become independent, the country must have a referendum, which must first be allowed by the UK government. Though Scotland now has a devolved parliament, some powers, such as the power to call a referendum, remain in the hands of the UK government. The SNP first mandated

allowing for a referendum while the second stage would be the referendum itself.¹⁹⁹⁷ In 1997, the SNP's manifesto declared they would begin negotiations for independence with the UK government as soon as the SNP gained the majority of MPs in Scotland, without a referendum. The party was quick to realize though that this would cost them votes, as voters who were wary of independence would not vote for the SNP if it meant independence would happen automatically. After the Scottish Parliament was established in 1999, the SNP put an independence referendum in its manifesto on a list of ten priorities, promising that independence would not occur simply because of an SNP majority. The SNP hoped that promising a referendum would help the party gain votes from both proponents and opponents of independence.²⁹ It was clear to the SNP that support for an independent Scotland was not enough to win them seats in Parliament, and that perhaps not all of Scotland wanted independence – at least, not right away.

A lack of overwhelming support for Scottish independence throughout Scotland continued throughout the early 2000s. In 2007, opinion polls showed that when the choice is not black and white, voters were less likely to choose independence. In one such poll, voters were offered three choices: the status quo, more powers for the Scottish Parliament, and independence. With these options, support for independence was only at 23 percent.³⁰ This reveals that perhaps complete independence was not what the majority of Scots ever wanted. Instead, further devolution or the status quo were more appealing. But even if the choice was black and white, independence still did not fare well; when the only choices were the status quo and independence, there was a 2:1 majority against independence. However, there was some hope for

²⁹ James Mitchell, "The Referendum Campaign," in *The Scottish Independence Referendum: Constitutional and Political Implications*, ed. Aileen McHarg, Tom Mullen, Alan Page, and Neil Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 76.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

the SNP; 83 percent of SNP voters supported independence. But the SNP realized that in order to gain independence, they would have to win a majority government in the Scottish Parliament – and in order to win a majority government, they would have to appeal to voters throughout Scotland, even those who did not support independence. This was especially clear to the SNP in 2007, when they were the largest party in Scotland's Parliament by only one seat.³¹

Just as the SNP recognized it needed a devolved Scottish Parliament to win independence, the party recognized it also needed control of that Parliament. To gain more support, the SNP began exploring different options besides independence that would appeal to voters. In 2007, the party published a white paper titled *Choosing Scotland's Future: A National Conversation*, which outlined three different options: independence, the status quo, and further devolution.³² The summary of the paper emphasized the importance of the Scottish people in determining Scotland's future:

This paper is the first step in a wide-ranging national conversation about the future of Scotland. This conversation will allow the people of Scotland to consider all the options for the future of the country and make informed decisions. This paper invites the people of Scotland to sign up for the national conversation and to suggest how the conversation should be designed to ensure the greatest possible participation.³³

Regardless of the SNP's goals, it would be up to the Scottish people to make the final decision.

The SNP hoped that a “national conversation” would garner more support for the SNP, and in 2011 they won the majority government they had hoped for, and support for the SNP had doubled. But support for independence had not changed as much as in 2007.³⁴ Regardless, the SNP kept its promise of negotiating a referendum with the UK government after gaining a majority in the Scottish Parliament. With the Edinburgh Agreement

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 79.

³³ Scottish Government, *Choosing Scotland's Future: A National Conversation* (2007).

³⁴ Mitchell, 79.

was fair and balanced; the UK government also published its own papers criticizing Scotland's

the vote and the Electoral Commission information booklet failed to present a clear explanation of what independence meant. Although the booklet included a joint statement by the UK and Scottish governments explaining the process of negotiations in the event of a “Yes” vote, this perhaps was not enough to convince voters to vote “Yes”. In addition, voters simply had different views on what they wanted for Scotland’s future. According to Scottish scholars Colin Kidd and Malcolm Petrie, voters could have been happy enough to support the SNP, but reluctant to endorse its flagship policy; or were acting tactfully to

it to function in a manner that is similar to a government.⁴⁴ However, it is not possible for the EU to ever truly be a government, as each member state has its own sovereign government that functions separately from the EU and other EU members.

The main benefit to being a member of the EU is having access to the common market, or the European Economic Community (EEC). This common market is an economic market that allows for the free movement of people, money, goods, and services. Terms of goods and services, as a member of the EU, a country would not have to worry about trade with other EU member states, as there would be no tariffs or restrictions. In terms of people, EU citizens have the freedom to work and live where they please, being able to move freely between any EU country without being subject to standard immigration policies. In terms of money, the EU has a common currency – the euro – which makes travel and trade easier, provides monetary stability, and allows for greater price transparency. Some of these policies are a result of the 1985 Schengen Agreement, the 1987 Single European Act, and the 1992 Maastricht Treaty. These removed customs and border checks within the Schengen zone, an area of the EU where people with an EU passport can move between countries with relative ease. They also removed fiscal barriers (forms of taxation such as excise duties and value added tax) and technical barriers (different health, safety, and consumer protection and environmental regulations).⁴⁵

The EU has its benefits, but it also has its flaws. Out of all the member states, the UK has always been quick to point out the disadvantages of being a member of the EU and has always been hesitant to truly integrate itself into the EU. The first and perhaps biggest of these issues is that it is unclear what the EU actually is. Though it is definitely not a government, it is unclear whether the EU is an intergovernmental organization (IGO), a supranational

⁴⁴ John McCormick, *Understanding the European Union: A Concise Introduction*

organization, or something in between. At first glance, it would seem like the ~~FUGO~~ ^{EU}, as it is an organization made up of multiple countries and their governments. However, the EU has a governmental structure of its own, with its own parliament and its own president, which stands apart from any country's parliament and leaders. In this way, the EU is a supranational organization, an organization that has a level of authority and cooperation that is autonomous, above the state, and powers that are independent of ⁴⁶ States.

This supranationalism is intimidating and threatening to some, especially the UK, because it calls into question the sovereignty of the member states. The overall goal of the EU is to unify the members states and create a sense of a unified Europe. The downside to this is that the more integrated Europe becomes, the less sovereignty each individual state has. Throughout the world, it is a common belief that one of the most important things a country can have is sovereignty, the ability to rule and govern itself. But despite ~~this~~ ^{that}, there are other downsides to the EU that point to states not losing their sovereignty; for one, different countries have different foreign policies, and the EU often struggles to come up with a unified foreign policy when different states each want different things. In addition, there is a limited understanding of

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who were Eurosceptic and those who were not. In 2015, Conservative Prime Minister

the UK now found itself in a predicament needing to negotiate an agreement with the EU on leaving. According to the EU's 2009 Lisbon Treaty, a leaving state shall negotiate a withdrawal agreement with the EU, which has not happened before in EU history. The negotiating process would be extremely difficult for the UK; for starters, in negotiations, the UK has a weak position, as the EU will most likely act without UK input. In addition, the UK still has to follow EU law during the negotiating period but is not allowed to take part in EU decision-making. The negotiations are also highly unpredictable; emotions are high on both the sides of the UK and the EU, and because such negotiations have never happened voluntarily before, there is much uncertainty on what the outcome will be. Possible outcomes include the UK maintaining a trade deal with the EU, remaining part of the European Economic Area, rejoining the European Free Trade Association, rejoining the EU's customs union, or joining the World Trade Organization. Each option has its pros and cons, but any trade deal with the EU would most likely require the UK to continue contributing to the EU budget or follow certain EU rules, and any trade deal outside the EU would result in higher tariffs and costs.

The official exit of the UK from the EU is set to happen on March 29, 2019, but as predicted, the negotiations have been difficult. Since the referendum, they have been almost at a

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number of proBrexit Conservative MPs.⁶²

and it has taken since March 2017 to reach this point.⁶⁵ Because of the political atmosphere within the UK and disagreements with negotiations between the UK and EU, the path to Brexit will continue to be a long and difficult road. To further complicate

a region as opposed to a sovereign nation. The SNP was also wary of EU policies regarding agriculture and fishing, fearing that Scotland's economy would be damaged by policies regulating these industries. However, from the late 1980s to late 1990s, the SNP changed its view on the EU. Rather than suffer because of the EU, Scotland had benefitted from the single market. SNP leaders also saw the EU as a way to promote independence; if Scotland were independent, they would have more influence on the world stage through EU membership and would also be able to negotiate EU policies that would benefit Scotland without the UK's input. An independent Scotland would thus have more influence in the EU than it currently had in UK affairs. Independence while also remaining an EU member might also provide stability. An independent Scotland would not be

the EU if it left the UK –thus the least risky option for EU supporters was to vote “No” in the 2014 independence referendum.⁷⁰

The result of the EU Referendum, however, left some Scots with a feeling of betrayal. Those who assumed the UK would never leave the EU were bound to regret their decision to vote “No” in 2014 – or so the SNP predicted. The SNP had always planned to promote independence in the event of Brexit; their 2016 manifesto stated that the Scottish Parliament would hold another referendum “if there is a significant and material change in the circumstances that prevailed in 2014, such as Scotland being taken out the EU against our will.”⁷¹ As in the 90’s, the SNP saw EU membership as a campaigning point for independence, and began to use the Brexit outcome to their advantage. Scotland’s First Minister and SNP party leader Nicola Sturgeon has especially been promoting independence since Brexit. St has argued that the UK has no right to force Scotland to leave the EU if it does not wish to, stating that it is “democratically unacceptable.”⁷² In a speech in March 2017, Sturgeon continued to mention that Brexit was not Scotland’s choice, declaring her dedication to setting up a second independence referendum:⁷³

Right now, Scotland stands at a hugely important crossroads. We didn’t choose to be in this position...if Scotland can be ignored on an issue as important as our membership of the EU and the single market, then it is clear that our voice and our interests can be ignored at any time and on any issue. I can confirm today that next week I will seek the authority of the Scottish Parliament to agree with the UK government the details of a section 30 order for the procedure that will enable the Scottish Parliament to legislate for an independence referendum.⁷³

⁷⁰ Dardanelli, 278.

⁷¹ *The SNP Party Manifesto 2016*, 23.

⁷² Lyndsie Bourgon, “Brexit Has Brought the Idea of Scottish Independence Back From the Dead,” *The Atlantic* April 20, 2017.

⁷³ Nicola Sturgeon, “Speech on Scotland’s Referendum” (speech, Edinburgh, Scotland, March 13, 2017), SNP.org.

And as Sturgeon promised, the SNP are demanding a second referendum. 04640 (b)T bm 02017,0 (b)T

It does not appear as though Scottish independence will come in the near future – but why? Regardless of whether or not there is a referendum, Scottish independence will not occur for a multitude of reasons, the first being that another referendum may not occur. For starters, May needs to approve the referendum, which she has so far refused to do because she is preoccupied with her election losses, Brexit negotiations, and other pressing issues, it is unlikely that she will turn her attention to approving a Scottish independence referendum. In addition, it is unlikely that Scots will want a referendum. Not only did the result of the snap election reveal that the SNP's campaign for independence was tiring, but voters in Scotland have also experienced election fatigue. Scotland has seen many elections in the past few years: the 2014 independence referendum, 2015 UK Parliament elections, 2016 Scottish Parliament elections, the 2016 EU Referendum, and the 2017 snap election. By the time of the EU referendum, voters were already feeling the fatigue – the First Ministers of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland objected to the June 2016 date because it was so soon after their assembly and parliament elections⁷⁹ in May. After the referendum and the snap election, tired voters are unlikely to want to vote again, lowering the chances of another independence referendum soon.

In the event May did approve a referendum and one was set, there is a slim chance that the majority of voters would vote for independence. One of the reasons for this is because there is no clear, unified idea of what Scottish nationalism is. Scottish national identity is a driving force behind the wish for independence, but this identity means different things to different people. There is no clear definition of Scottish ethnic identity, creating a question of what “Scottishness” is and what makes a person Scottish. Some believe that Scottishness can be marked by birth, ancestry and residence; in order to be Scottish, one must have either been born

⁷⁹ Castle.

⁸⁰ Torrance, chapter 1.

in Scotland, have ancestors from Scotland, or live in Scotland. Here there has been a difference in opinion between the masses and the political elite of Scotland; while the masses believe birth and ancestry are extremely important, the elite believe that living in Scotland and feeling Scottish is enough to make one Scottish. Scottish identity could also relate to politics and current events, and fluctuations in Scottish identity have correlated to the political situation of the times. For example, 1979 saw the lowest recorded level of Scottish identity, perhaps because of the failed devolution referendum of that year. In the 1990s, the level of Scottish identity rose, perhaps because devolution succeeded.⁸¹

The nature of Scottish nationalism has also changed over time. Some, such as University of Edinburgh professor Alasdair Raffe, have stated that Scottish nationalism is less secessionist than it used to be. The SNP promotes an independent Scotland in the EU, which would mean remaining in one union while leaving another. In 2007, the SNP also proposed that an independent Scotland would continue to be associated with certain UK institutions, such as the National Health Service.⁸² Because Scottish nationalism and ideas involving independence are constantly changing, it would be difficult to vote for independence without a clear understanding of what an independent Scotland and nationality would mean.

Scottish identity also includes the question of British identity – is it possible to be both Scottish and British? For the political elite, who have to navigate both the Scottish government and the UK government, it is not only possible to be both, but necessary. For others, though, the idea of being British is appalling, due to the history between Scotland and the UK and a dislike of Scotland's "subservience" to the UK.⁸³ But being able to say "I am not British" or "I am

⁸¹ Leith, 79, 84.

⁸² Alasdair Raffe, "1707, 2007, and the Unionist Turn in Scottish History," *The Historical Journal* 53, no. 4 (2010): 1082.

⁸³ Leith, 123, 131.

Scottish” is easier than explaining why these identities exist. When writing *Political Discourse and National Identity in Scotland*, authors Murray Stewart Leith and Daniel P. J. Soule

interviewed members of the Scottish political elite. One interviewee stated:

I am fiercely Scottish in those aspects of my life that I allow myself to be...I feel a sense of identity...but if you ask me to what...I am affected by the symbols of national identity but I am not sure I can identify it for you. I feel pride in Scottish institutions, I feel pride in Scottish traditions...I find it very difficult to define myself, and perhaps it is easier to define oneself by what one isn't and I am not English.⁸⁴

Scots feel a strong sense of nationalism, but they cannot quite place what Scottish nationalism truly is. Because Scottish nationalism has numerous connotations, it is nearly impossible to build an independent Scotland on nationalistic principles alone. Just as Scots each have their own idea of “Scottishness,” they also have different ideas about independence. Though Scottish nationalism is strong, it does not necessarily equal a strong independence movement or a cohesive idea on what nationalism and independence means.

Along with the complicated picture of Scottish nationalism, there is also a question of whether or not an independent Scotland would be able to remain in the EU, and this is valuable after Brexit. If Scotland did remain in the EU, Scotland's economy could suffer; 63 percent of Scotland's trade is with Britain, while only 16 percent is with the rest of the EU.⁸⁵ With the UK leaving the EU, Scotland would lose its free trade with the UK, making its economy rather than aiding it. But there is a question about whether Scotland even could remain. There is no clear procedure within EU law regarding when a region of an EU member secedes, and with Brexit, there is no clear procedure on what happens when a region of a state wishes to remain. The question of EU membership and whether or not Scotland could remain posed an issue in the 2014 referendum; though Sturgeon believed that Scotland would be

⁸⁴ Ibid., 127.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

guaranteed membership, the European Commission President José Manuel Barroso believed that Scotland would have to reapply for membership.⁸⁶ The risk of losing EU membership was too high in 2014 for voters to vote for independence. Now losing EU membership with the UK is a given, but it is not guaranteed that an independent Scotland would be allowed to remain in the EU after the UK leaves. If May did not approve a referendum until after March 2019, Scotland would leave the EU with the rest of the UK and would most likely have to reapply for EU membership if it later became independent. Though talk of Scottish independence reemerged due to Scotland wanting to remain in the EU, it is unlikely that an independent Scotland could avoid a period of time being outside the EU.

Adding to the unpredictability of Brexit, independence in and of itself is risky. Scotland's economy would be the largest obstacle in an independent Scotland. Scotland's economic situation is much different than it was during the last independence referendum. When the SNP aimed for independence in 2014, it was counting on the oil in the North Sea. However, since 2014, profits from Scotland's oil have decreased. In the 2012-fiscal year, Scotland's oil revenues were £9.6 billion, but in 2015-2016 it had decreased significantly to £600 million. In addition to this, Scotland's budget deficit is twice of Britain's, and Scotland's rate of growth is a third of Britain's. In the event of independence, it would be economically difficult for Scotland to support itself, making independence unappealing. Brexit further complicates this. Brexit negotiations have so far been unpredictable, and the UK's economy after Brexit is uncertain. With the future of the UK as a whole being unknown, Scottish voters are unwilling to take the risk of voting for independence. One such prospective voter was Ian Rampton, a citizen of Edinburgh, who stated "Right now there's too much uncertainty just about Scotland but

⁸⁶ Flamini, Roland. "Scotland's Independence Bid: History, Prospects, Challenges." *Journal of Energy & Development* 240 (s)5(-)1(22)(") J/TJ /TT1 1 Tf -0.001

about Brexit.⁸⁷ This uncertainty could prevent voters from voting for independence because of Scotland's economy, the unpredictable nature of Brexit, differences on Scottish nationalism, and a rise in conservatism amongst Scottish voters, it appears as though a referendum on Scottish independence and an outcome of a "Yes" vote is not in the near future.

Of course, there is a chance that the UK and Scotland could see a shift in perspective in the coming years. By the next general election, events, opinions, and the government could change. The snap election offers a glimpse of May's declining popularity, and it is entirely possible that Labour could win a majority in the next general election – they already gained a significant number of seats this past June. A Labour government could be more likely to approve a Scottish independence referendum. Jeremy Corbyn, the head of the Labour Party, stated in a March 2017 interview that Scotland should be allowed to have a referendum if they wished, saying, "I don't think it's the job of Westminster or the Labour Party to prevent people holding referenda. But this does not mean that Labour supports Scottish independence. A few days later, Corbyn clarified his statement: "But just to be absolutely clear, I do not think there should be another referendum. I think that independence would be economically catastrophic for many people in Scotland."⁸⁸ Regardless of Labour's position on independence, though, it is possible that an independence referendum could be granted to Scotland if Labour were to control Parliament. But even in the event of a referendum occurring, because of Labour, would Scots vote for independence? Only if their ideas on independence changed. Things can change quickly in a few years; Brexit negotiations will have finished, the economy could improve (seriously), and ideas on Scottish nationalism itself could evolve. But these scenarios can only be imagined

⁸⁷ Erlanger.

⁸⁸ Joe Watts, "Jeremy Corbyn comes out against second Scottish referendum after saying he would be 'absolutely fine' with one" The Independent, March 13, 2017.

at the moment, and it is impossible to tell if the tide will change enough to lead to Scottish independence. At the situation is now, Scottish independence is not in the immediate future

Conclusion

As Brexit talks continue and the future of the UK remains unknown, so too does the future of Scotland and Scottish independence. Whether or not Scotland will ever become independent is hard to tell, but for now it does not appear as though Scotland will be independent soon. Scottish nationalism, in terms of both politics and identity, does not necessarily equal a strong independence movement. Independence needs political backing to come to fruition, and for decades, Scotland's quest for independence has been in the hands of the SNP. But support for the SNP has waxed and waned over time. Though the SNP's support since 2007 and 2011, the 2017 snap election saw a decline in support for the SNP, which does not bode well for independence. The snap election dealt a harsh blow to the SNP, which now realizes that independence is not the number one priority for voters. However, independence in Scotland does not ride solely on the power of the SNP. The 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum failed despite the SNP having control of a majority government in the Scottish Parliament. There are other factors in the independence equation.

Will independence come soon to Scotland? Most likely not. Though a majority of Scots voted to Remain in the EU, other factors make it unlikely that an independence referendum will occur in the near future. But this is not to say that Scotland will never become independent. If the SNP works on its policies, Scotland works on its economy, and if Scottish nationalists work on finding a unifying factor within Scottish nationalism, Scottish independence can be possible. Even in the age of Brexit, this can be a goal that Scotland can continue to strive towards.

Mitchell, James. "The Referendum Campaign." *The Scottish Independence Referendum: Constitutional and Political Implications*

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