

THE NATIONAL

THE NEWSPAPER THAT SUPPORTS AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND

From the Spanish veto to the budget black hole: here's why they're wrong



Today: This is why the biggest independence myths are nonsense

Scotland would be at the back of the queue to join the EU

THERE'S a queue for EU membership, and an independent Scotland would be right at the back of it – or so goes this often-repeated myth.

But its popularity has nothing to do with its veracity because joining the European Union is not, in the words of one diplomat, "like waiting in a shop for your turn to arrive".

The truth is that the queue simply doesn't exist. If you meet the requirements and you want to join, then you get in.

Miguel Angel Vecino Quintana, the former Spanish Consul General in Edinburgh, said that in an official letter earlier this year. Last year Guy Verhofstadt, the European Parliament's chief negotiator on Brexit, told MPs it is a "simple fact" that there is "no big obstacle" for an independent Scotland seeking accession.

Yes, there are other countries who are in the process of meeting the requirements needed to become an EU member, but Scotland's position is not affected at all by those countries.

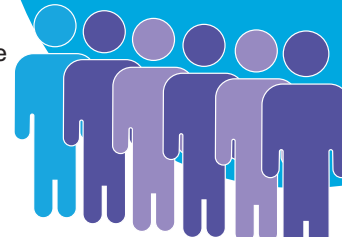
Elmar Brok, ex-chair of the European Parliament's Foreign

Affairs Committee, has also dismissed the queue claim. And Fabian Zuleeg, of the European Policy Centre, has stated that a knock-back for a bid by a newly sovereign Edinburgh would be "inconceivable".

Even Lord Kerr, who wrote Article

WHAT TO SAY

There is no queue to join the EU – applicants just need to fulfil criteria on laws, human rights and economy. Scotland is in the EU so already meets all of the requirements. The fact that other countries also want to join is irrelevant to our position. European leaders know we don't want to leave and have already shown goodwill towards us.



50, which triggered the official withdrawal process, has said talk of membership problems is "all balls". In a 2017 interview with BuzzFeed, he said: "The Scots have to leave the EU with the UK – if the UK leaves – then go independent. Once they've been recognised all round as independent, they can then knock on the front door marked 'accession'. That's the bad news, but the good news is that it would be a very swift accession negotiation. The sort of rubbish people talk about – back of the queue, behind the Turks – that's all balls because there is no queue."

Referring to the *acquis communautaire*, or EU law, he went on: "People who are declared eligible to join can join as soon as they're ready to accept the whole of the *acquis*. Since the Scots would, presumably, still be applying something very close to the existing *acquis*, they'd be in very fast."

In fact, there has been no shortage of goodwill expressed by Europe's politicians on Scotland's place in that family of nations. German MEP Terry Reintke

is among 50 Green politicians from across the bloc to sign a letter stating that an independent Scotland would be "most welcome as a full member of the European Union", even though the weight of votes cast in England and Wales is dragging us out of the bloc. She said: "The question of Scotland's constitutional future and its relationship with the EU is for the people in Scotland to decide. Irrespective of what they choose to do, we want to send a strong, cross-party, cross-national message that the door to a common European future remains open."

European leaders know the outcome of the Brexit referendum, and they know that Scotland voted overwhelmingly to remain.

Last month Dutch MEP Esther de Lange, the deputy leader of the largest party in the European Parliament, said she'd support a bid by a fully-autonomous Holyrood, telling the Sunday National: "You would be more ready to join as you would still have most of the *acquis communautaire* so that could make it easier for you compared to a country where the rule of law is not in order, where journalists are in prison, where they are not ready to take up our laws."



Scotland would have to join the euro

IF we had a pound for every time we've heard this one, we'd pay people to stop repeating it – because it's patently untrue.

Of the 28 current EU member states, 19 use the euro. That was introduced for electronic transactions in 1999, then in cash form three years later, with 12 countries involved at first. The plan was to make cross-border trade easier and create economic stability. However, two member states – the UK and Denmark – negotiated opt-outs and seven others are outwith the euro as they do not fulfil criteria to join.

According to the EU's own website all member states, with the exception of those with

opt-outs, are "required to adopt the euro and join the euro area", having first met "convergence criteria".

But there is no timetable for this, and half of the 13 nations that have joined the EU since 2004 are still not on board.

One of the preparatory steps for adopting the euro is membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) for at least two years. That step, as explained to Kay Burley of Sky News by the SNP's Ian Blackford in a broadcast that went viral, is "entirely voluntary". He said: "You can't be forced into the euro against your will. The last three countries that have joined the EU have not joined the euro."

What is the ERM anyway? In the words of the European Commission, it ensures exchange rate fluctuations between the euro and other currencies within the EU don't "disrupt economic stability". EU members not using the euro can peg their currency to it, with the value of their system allowed to rise and fall within certain boundaries.

While the EU says member states are "expected to participate" in the ERM, it is emphasised that "participation in ERM is voluntary for non-euro countries with an opt-out from the single currency".

Scotland could, if it wanted, seek to negotiate an opt-out, or do as Bulgaria, Romania and

WHAT TO SAY

A new EU nation would have to make a notional commitment to joining the euro at some point – but there's no timetable or any pressure to do so. Only 19 of 28 current members use the euro, and Sweden still isn't in after 14 years. An independent Scotland could choose to join the euro, or hold on to its own currency indefinitely – we'd have the power to make that choice.



Croatia have done and take its time over potential eventual membership – none of them have as yet joined the ERM. After all, the EU says it is "up to individual countries to calibrate their path towards the euro".

Under this policy, an independent Scotland within the EU could seek to retain its own currency indefinitely. That could be sterling, as now, but at the recent SNP conference, delegates voted to make the introduction of a new Scottish currency the party's official policy. Under that plan, the timing of the switch would be determined by six economic tests.

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has said he has "no intention of forcing countries to join the euro if they are not willing or not able to do so".

And there's a solid example of this in the case of Sweden, which became an EU member state in 1995. It still uses the krona – and it's still not a member of the ERM.

Politicians asked the public there if they wanted to join the currency union in 2003, a question which was answered with a "no".

What we do know about the immediate economic future for Scotland is that we are braced for a hit as the UK pulls us out of Europe – the only question is how big that will be. Scottish businesses exported £14.9 billion worth of goods and services to the EU in 2017, with successful trade deals taking that figure up by more than 13% in just one year. It is thought that leaving the bloc could cost us around £16bn a year.

But Spain would veto Scottish membership of the European Union!

THE so-called "Spanish veto" is one of the most enduring anti-independence myths. First circulated in 2012 in the weeks after the intention to hold a

referendum on the country's future was announced, it contends that there is no way an independent Scotland would be allowed to join the European Union, because Spain would exercise its veto rights to block the move.

The logic goes that this would happen because Spain does not want to offer encouragement to pro-indy activists in Catalonia and the Basque Country, among others.

Originally reported by the Independent on Sunday, it was then attributed to anonymous "Whitehall sources" and an unnamed UK Government minister, but did not include any response from Spanish leaders – who have repeatedly stated that they would do nothing of the sort.

In February 2012, Spanish foreign minister Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo made this categorical denial of the veto myth: "If the two parts of the United Kingdom are in agreement that it is in accord with their constitutional arrangement, written or unwritten, Spain would have nothing to say. We would simply maintain that it does not affect us."

In case that wasn't clear enough, he added: "The constitutional arrangements of the United Kingdom are one thing, those of Spain another, and it is their own business if they decide to separate from one another."

But when the Better Together campaign continued to circulate the myth, he went on record again in February 2014 to say that an independent Scotland's admission to the EU "can be considered" as long as the move is "in accordance with the legal and institutional procedures".

However, that still didn't stop pro-Union campaigners trotting it out again and again, and in the last week of August 2014, Better Together circulated comments by Ruairi Quinn, a former president of the European and Financial Affairs Council of the EU, saying that Spain would veto Scotland's entry.

Douglas Alexander, the then-shadow foreign secretary and Better Together figurehead, said: "That it is taking outsiders like Mr Quinn to tell Scots the truth on issues like the EU is testament to the deceit of the nationalist campaign."

Which would be fine, if that was anywhere near accurate.

As this newspaper revealed in June,

Spain's most senior diplomat in Scotland stressed it had never been Spanish policy to veto Scotland's aspirations in a letter sent to the Scottish Government and The Herald in April this year.

The National obtained the unpublished letter from Miguel Angel Vecino Quintana, then the Spanish Consul General in Edinburgh, under Freedom of Information laws.

It was sent in response to a report which contained comments from a Spanish MEP from opposition party Partido Popular (PP), who'd said Scotland would have to "get in line, behind Turkey and behind Serbia, to end up as an EU state".

But the diplomat wrote: "The Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Joseph Borrell has recently declared that Spain will not block Scotland's entry into the European Union if independence is legally achieved and such has always been the intention of the Spanish Government."

"The Spanish Government has not and never will intervene in the internal affairs of the United Kingdom or any other state and expects the same reciprocal attitude."

He went on: "I would like to make it very clear that Mr Gonzalez Pons' statement is his and his party's exclusive responsibility and not the Spanish Government's at all."

It should be remembered, of course, that Scots were told the only way to protect EU membership was to stay in the Union – something that was, like the claims of a Spanish veto, categorically untrue.

WHAT TO SAY

The Spanish Government will NOT veto Scottish accession to the European Union – and it has been repeating that message for years. The "Spanish veto" is simply a lie used to scare Scots into voting No, regardless of what pro-Union campaigners and newspapers want you to think.

It would be crazy to leave the UK single market (the what?)

THE craziest thing about this one is the idea that there is a UK single market in the first place.

There is no such entity as the UK single market. The only formal trading bloc to which Scotland is a member, by dint of EU membership, is the EU single market.

Made up of a series of measures and enforced by the European Court of Justice, it exists to eliminate barriers to the free movement of goods, services and labour. And nothing like it exists between UK countries and regions.

All the business that we do now is regulated by those same EU laws, and when we are hoiked out of the EU against our will that'll all end, putting Scotland on the outside of a market eight times the size of the UK's.

According to some that's fine because Scotland does more business with the rest of the UK than the EU. Figures released in January confirm that's true – exports to elsewhere in the UK were worth £48.9 billion in 2017, up 4.6%.

But it's bad for Scotland to be dependent on UK trade and that's why it must diversify like Ireland did. So it's welcome news that international exports grew at the faster rate of 6.2% to £32.4bn. And sales to the EU were up 13.3% to £14.9bn. The US continued to be Scotland's top export destination country with an estimated worth of £5.5bn.

We are now on the brink of leaving our fastest growing market. And what happens next remains unclear. It all depends on what sort of deal we leave with, if any – and that won't be determined by Scotland, but by Westminster.

The fact is, we have no idea what trade is going to look like after Brexit, even at a domestic level.

It is not impossible that the UK Government would seek to establish a formal UK single market in the future, potentially stimulating regulatory competition, but that is certainly not worth banking on.

It's also possible, as is feared by the Scottish Government, that the UK Government will undertake a "power grab" and claw back competency over devolved matters through a new framework.

But again, we just don't know now.

What we can say for sure is that the final outcome will be by London-based decision-makers using London-centric thinking.

Last month the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said it wants to have "the greatest possible tariff-free and barrier-free trade with our European neighbours and negotiate our own trade agreements" after Brexit, a comment made after a meeting between Scottish seafood industry leaders and then environment secretary Michael Gove.

But after the same meeting, Hamish Macdonell, of the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation, said officials had failed to protect seafood exports to Europe in a no-deal scenario, stating: "We believe more has to be done."

If all of this proves anything, it's that staying inside the UK is a one-way ticket to uncertainty.

In 2014 we were promised that a No vote meant economic safety, business security and regulatory continuity. But, five years on, it is now clear that remaining in the UK does not mean protecting the status quo, because that's about to be ripped up thanks to the result of a separate referendum in which Scotland emphatically backed Remain, but England voted to Leave.

The only way for Scotland to take real control over trade is to deliver a Yes majority in a second independence referendum – one which would take place against a radically different political backdrop.

It's worth looking to Ireland for a glimpse at how things could change for an independent Scotland. In 2002, that country sent almost 24% of its exports to the UK and 16% to America.

By 2018 that had flipped, with just 11% sent to the UK and 28.5% entering the US. At around 40%, sales to the rest of the EU were roughly stable.

But here's the really interesting bit: when Ireland first became independent, it relied heavily on trade with the United Kingdom – to a far greater extent than Scotland does currently.

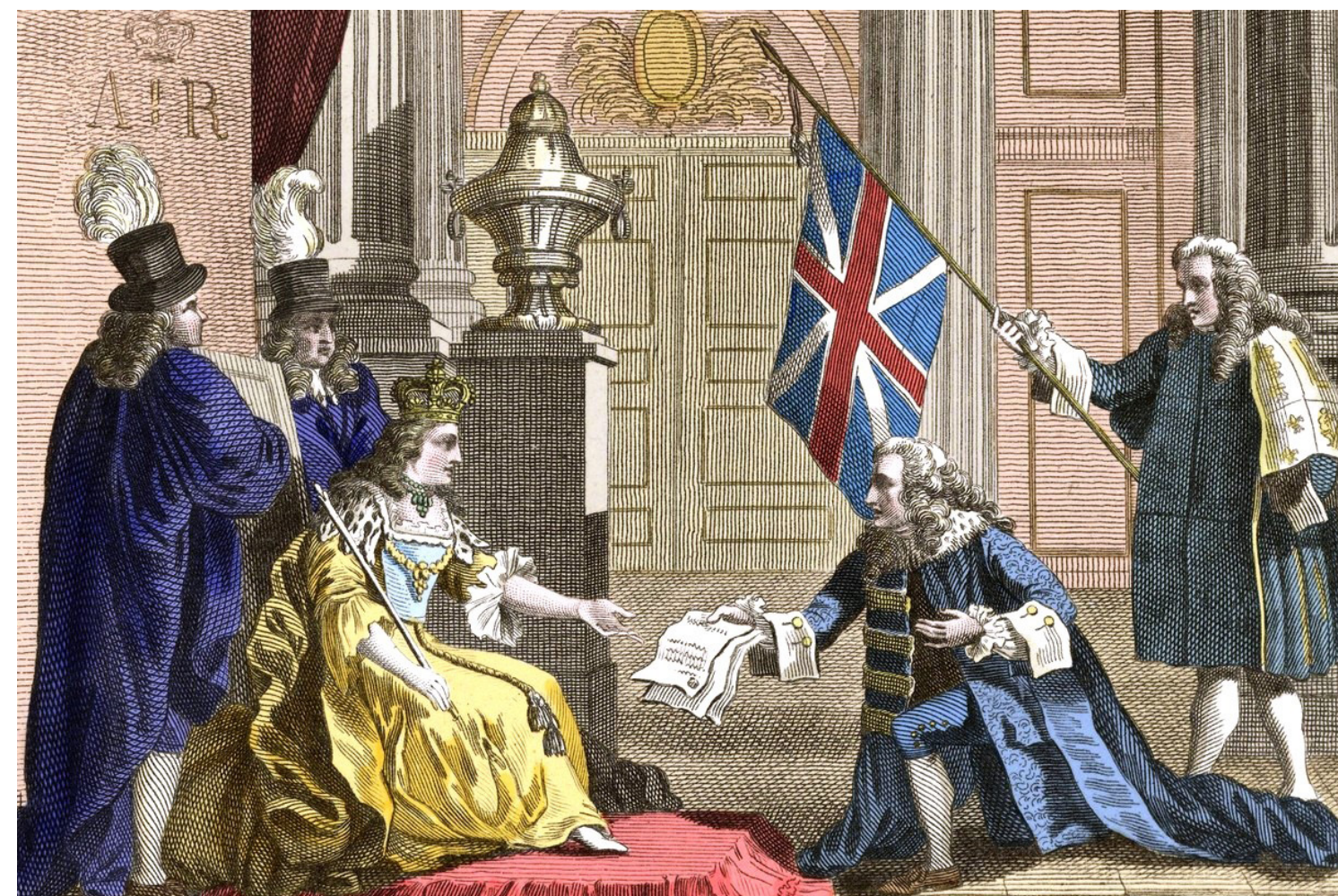
Now it's one of the fastest growing countries in all of Europe – and the UK is lagging behind.

That's what can happen by making independence your business.

WHAT TO SAY

There's no such thing as the UK single market, and we're in the process of being removed from a trading bloc eight times larger. The European Union is Scotland's fastest growing export market and we still don't know what kind of deal we'll leave with. Independence within Europe is a safer bet for business.

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It's hard to leave a 40-year Union ... what about one that's 300 years old?

AS scare stories go, Brexit is perhaps the most terrifying. It has destroyed confidence in the UK Government, brought down one prime minister in Theresa May and installed another in Boris Johnson.

It has seen big companies like

And, three years on from the vote, we are still no closer to establishing what the terms of withdrawal will be or what life in post-Brexit Britain will look like.

Farming, fishing, exports, human rights rules, even peace in Northern Ireland – there are no answers on any of these questions.

And that, the Unionist argument goes, shows why Scotland should never again seek independence – it's simply too hard to disentangle long-standing legal frameworks governing law, trade and the movement of people.

But the big problem of Brexit is that the UK Government had no blueprint for leaving when they asked the public to go to the polls, having given them a matter of weeks to consider the question.

That's because they expected to win a Remain majority, and so all of the thinking on these crucial matters of day-to-day living and national security is only being done now.

Dyson – run by a man who championed leaving the EU – take steps to move their headquarters from the UK.

It has given rise to the Brexit Party and the right, it's threatened the future of universities, scientific research, commerce and family life for those born elsewhere in the EU.

And that's why it's all such a guddle.

They say breaking up is hard to do, but that really depends on the way you go about it. Brexit is the clearest example possible of the wrong way.

When Scotland voted on its future in 2014, it did so following a lengthy period of nuanced debate which generated never-before-seen levels of political engagement and got the public thinking – and, crucially, talking – about what kind of country they wanted Scotland to be.

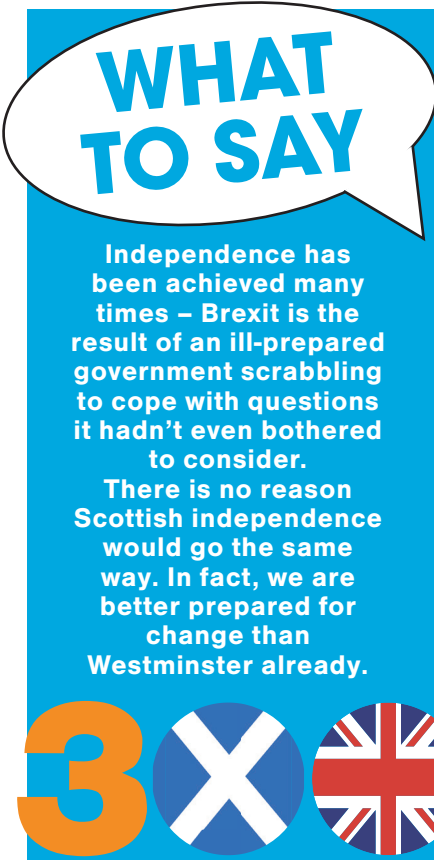
That's given rise to all kinds of things, including a laudable network of community projects aimed at connecting people and lifting them up, such as Back to School banks.

And since that result, we've seen a sizeable shift in voters moving from No to Yes, on account of the broken Westminster promises.

That level of engagement means we're better placed to hold politicians to account and to set out what we want for the future of our country and our people.

That means our families, our neighbours and our colleagues – it's about all of us.

It could be argued that independence for Scotland is the opposite of Brexit. The country has already made it clear that it wants



WHAT TO SAY

Independence has been achieved many times – Brexit is the result of an ill-prepared government scrabbling to cope with questions it hadn't even bothered to consider.

There is no reason Scottish independence would go the same way. In fact, we are better prepared for change than Westminster already.



There's a £14 billion black hole at the heart of Scotland's budget

SCOTLAND is one of the richest countries in the world. It's in the top 25 global economies in terms of income per capita and, according to the Office for National Statistics, has at least 34% of the UK's total natural wealth, including wind, water, timber, oil and gas.

But thanks to Unionist rhetoric, many underestimate the economy and the country's abilities.

Last year's GERS figures, which estimate our tax and spending, showed that Scotland had a deficit of £13.4 billion – or the equivalent of 7.9% of GDP.

First of all, it's perfectly normal for countries to run a small budget deficit. Out of the 28 EU nations in 2018, half of them spent more than they raised in taxes.

Yes, Scotland would have to improve its financial position to match these other independent countries, but the key point to remember here is that our current finances reflect our position within the UK, not as an independent country. In fact, our notional deficit is a strong argument for change, not more of the same. The real focus would be on maintaining sustainable public finances.

The UK economy is wildly imbalanced in favour of London and the south-east. The Treasury makes decisions not for the benefit of the people of Scotland, but for the benefit of people living in England (and mostly in the south).

While the Scottish Government has recently gained responsibility for limited tax and welfare powers, it lacks the real levers necessary to take full economic control. That includes immigration policy, for example – the Home Office's "hostile environment" towards migrants will, research suggests, cost us tax income, job creation and even threaten the sustainability of services and remote and rural communities.

Independence would enable the Scottish Parliament to do what every other nation does – choose its own priorities.

That means focusing spending on the areas that matter, like social security, and ending commitments to wasteful projects like Trident renewal.

That scheme, put at more than £50bn by the National Audit Office, will consume 25% of the Ministry of Defence's 10-year equipment plan.

The SNP, Scottish Greens and Scottish Labour all oppose the system – and the decision to spend Scottish taxpayers' money on it.

But with defence a reserved matter, they're powerless to stop it.

So sticking with Britain will cost us all, and the only way to spear the Trident

project – and remove nuclear weapons from the Clyde – is to vote for independence.

Anti-nuclear campaigner Bill Kidd MSP – co-president of the international Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) group, which covers more than 75 nations – said: "The cost of Trident renewal is enormous and unjustifiable, particularly when the Tories have slashed public spending elsewhere."

"It is increasingly obvious that the UK Government's single-minded obsession with nuclear weapons is going to come at a huge cost to our conventional defence. "Independence will mean a Scotland free of nuclear weapons, rather than paying through the nose for these wasteful and immoral weapons."

The reality is that the risks to Scottish pensions, services, jobs and businesses all come from a single source – continued membership of the United Kingdom.

That's because it's the UK that is on course to crash out of Europe, regardless of the will of the Scottish people. And that's a very live example of the fact that it is in London, not Edinburgh, that power really resides.

Of course, part of how we see the country's fortunes is about how the figures are spun.

Writing in the Daily Mail, Tory MP Liz Truss said she had given £737 million of extra cash to Holyrood due to a shortfall in income tax revenues. However, that money in fact represents a settlement of the sum that was already taken from block grant funding due to a forecasting error.

But that rhetoric of dependency has long been at the heart of the Unionist argument. It's time to see it for what it is.

WHAT TO SAY

Our current financial position is based on Scotland's position in the Union, not as an independent country. With the levers of independence, we can stimulate and grow our economy to match that of our small successful neighbours. An independent Scotland would also never have to pay for its share in hugely expensive projects like the renewal of the UK's nuclear weapons. Staying in the Union will cost Scotland access to its fastest growing market, cut off labour supplies and reduce the tax take. That's not a price worth paying.



Scotland could vote for Labour to get rid of Tory governments

SCOTLAND doesn't need sovereignty, it just needs to back Labour and vote the Tories out, or so this one goes. Labour politicians and activists, unsurprisingly, are keen to spout this myth.

The only problem is that it's complete nonsense.

We've already been here, and not just once. Scotland voted Labour at every Westminster election between 1959 and 2015, when the SNP secured a landslide and Labour was reduced to a single MP.

In all those years, Labour governments were returned only seven times.

In fact, for 43 of the last 68 years, Scotland has NOT had the government of its choice. Nearly two thirds of the time Scots have had to answer to a prime minister we didn't vote for.

Margaret Thatcher, John Major, David Cameron – Scotland had to suffer under Tory prime ministers despite voting consistently for Labour in that time.

On those occasions, it wasn't the force of the Scottish vote that swung the result, it was the will of voters in England, where 85% of the total UK electorate resides.

In a first-past-the-post Westminster system, there is nothing Scotland can do to ensure it can get the government it wants. If

it could be done, it would have been done already. After all, we've been at this since 1707.

Of the 650 current Westminster constituencies – they've increased and decreased throughout the decades – 59 of those are Scottish. Another 40 are Welsh and 18 are Northern Irish.

Even if the entire electorate of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland combined to vote Labour as one – which would be impossible, given that Labour doesn't stand in Northern Ireland – that still only gives us 117 to England's 533 seats.

It's plain to see that, with around 85% of the total UK electorate, it is England that decides who the UK Government is.

And removing Scottish votes from the equation does little to change the arithmetic. Tony Blair's 1997 win would still have happened if Scots ballot papers had been discounted, leaving New Labour with a majority of almost 140 seats. Doing this in 2005 would have left the party 43 seats in the clear.

It's likewise been argued that voting SNP only serves to install the Tories. But as the numbers above show, that's a fallacy.

Whichever party you back – Greens, LibDems, you name it – it's hard to make this particular argument stack up. But it's worth noting that as SNP support has grown, both Labour and the Tories have targeted this bloc ahead of Westminster ballots using a version of this argument, with one Labour leaflet claiming a cross in that box would let the Tories in "through the back door" and the Tories stating that it would lead to Scots MPs "propping up" a Labour administration.

As we've shown, these are false claims.

In recent years, the Conservatives have instituted the bedroom tax, the rape clause and Universal Credit.

But however unpopular that is in Scotland – and those policies have been roundly denounced – it is the democratic deficit, not dislike of the Cameron-May-Johnson government, that continues to drive arguments for independence.

It's the inability to install a government with policies that align

WHAT TO SAY

If it was that simple, we would have done it by now. Scotland has been led by a string of governments we didn't choose – 43 out of the past 68 years – because we have far fewer voters and MPs than England.

Independence means Scotland gets the government it votes for – every time.



to the electorate's own priorities, whatever they may be. It could be Brexit, it could be drugs policy, it could be nuclear weapons or renewable energy or immigration. Right now, all of these are policy areas reserved to Westminster, where opinion and action are out of step with Scotland.

Voting Labour is unlikely to change any of that. The adoption of a new, more representative electoral system could do it, but that's not on the cards.

Earlier this year Plaid Cymru leader Adam Price predicted that independence for Scotland and Wales is "only a matter of when", adding: "People can only take so much before they choose a different, better path."

"For both our countries, that path can only lead to one future: independence."

"It's just a matter of a time, but it's coming very, very quickly. It's time the British establishment realised it."

Independence = the SNP and Nicola Sturgeon

YOU heard it all the time in 2014 – it's "Alex Salmond's referendum". Unionists were quick to make independence about personalities that they thought were divisive.

And you can imagine them making the next independence referendum all about Nicola Sturgeon if it suits them.

But really, the debate over Scotland's constitutional future is not about any one person or personality – it's a decision which will have consequences long after anyone who's in politics at the moment has left the public stage.

Put simply, the indy debate is about where we want our decisions to be taken. And the best place for that is Holyrood, not Westminster.

Another thing you might hear is that independence is all about the SNP. But that's just not true either. The Yes movement is about much more than just one party.

Yes, the SNP have been the dominant force in Scottish politics since 2007, when they became the largest party in the Scottish Parliament – and they haven't been out of power since.

And since 2007, the SNP have picked up more council seats, more Holyrood seats and more Westminster seats, with the latter rising to a historic 56 in 2016 before falling back to 35 last time around.

But several other parties in Scotland also want full sovereignty, like the Scottish Greens, who gained ground in each of the most recent council and Holyrood elections. The SSP and Solidarity also support constitutional change and, like the SNP and Greens, would seek a second indyref.

The Yes movement is also made up of non-party and cross-party groups like the Scottish Independence Convention, Voices for Scotland, Women for Independence, Business for Scotland and NHS for Yes.

Some people also claim that an independent Scotland would be run by an SNP Government for ever and a day. In fact, there is nothing to suggest that this would be the case.

In fact, independence is likely to give rise to a new politics for a new state. The reconvened Scottish Parliament has already brought a taste of this, becoming a "rainbow parliament" from its early days and allowing the Scottish Greens, Scottish Socialist Party, Independents and Scottish Senior Citizens Unity Party to

enter the chamber in a way that would not be possible through a Westminster election.

A "new politics" could also bring new opportunities for long-established parties, albeit in a different form. No longer shackled to London, Labour, the Conservatives and the LibDems could, if they chose, establish themselves as new, vital forces in the political life and governance of an independent state fully able to exercise powers over pay and conditions for workers, defence policy, drugs laws and tax regimes.

With Labour currently languishing in fifth place in some polls, its best chance at political relevance again is, arguably, in an independent Scotland.

While the SNP runs on a number of policy platforms, it is independence that keeps that party together.

After that is achieved, who knows? It has been suggested that the opposing factions within this broad church – those seeking more controls on industry and those aiming to attract more big businesses, those with small-c conservative

social values and those with markedly liberal principles – would break away to form new parties, potentially ending the SNP dominance for good.

So a Yes vote isn't about parties or personalities, it's about restoring power to the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish people, putting control over what happens in Scotland into our own hands.

If, having achieved this, Scots no longer want an SNP government, then they won't elect one. We wouldn't bet on it, though!

“A Yes vote isn't about parties or personalities, it's about restoring power

Scotland could not use the pound!

CURRENCY has been one of the big talking points of the independence debate, thanks in part to this oft-repeated myth.

Scaring Scots about what was in their wallet was an effective move for Better Together's Project Fear, which had a sharp focus on the economy.

Almost five years on, it's still on the minds of many members of the public – but it's not true.

When this one first emerged, the SNP had proposed entering into a formal currency union with the rest of the UK after independence, something

roundly rejected by then chancellor George Osborne, despite dismissals from the Yes side, who said the Exchequer could not afford to cut ties with a key market.

That's not the preferred position now, of course – SNP members have voted to make transitioning to a new Scots currency their number one choice if their party's in charge after a Yes vote – but until that happens, Scotland WILL continue to use the pound. And nothing would change until it's in our best interests for it to do so, and until we decided it was the right time.

That's because there are no

practical or legal ways in which the rest of the UK could stop us – meaning no change to the money in your pocket.

Take the example of the US dollar, for instance. It's used far from America's borders – in Zimbabwe, El Salvador and several other independent nations.

Then there's Monaco, Kosovo or Montenegro, all of which use the euro, despite being outwith the eurozone.

And, after all, the pound belongs just as much to Scotland as any other part of the UK.

But if an independent Scotland was to keep the pound, the Bank of England

would still set interest rates and monetary policy would also come from south of the Border. That's why the preferred position now is to move to a new currency as soon as practicable, giving Scottish leaders greater control over the economy.

But for the initial period at least, Scotland would continue to use sterling, providing continuity until six key economic tests are met and the switch to a new system could take place.

This period would provide certainty for businesses, mortgages, pensions and

WHAT TO SAY

Of course an independent Scotland could use sterling – if it wants to. The pound is just as much Scotland's as England's and many nations already use the currency of other states. But a transition to a new Scottish currency would offer greater control of economic levers.



wages until we get our central bank up and running and our public finances ready for the switch.

Making a Scottish Pound Plan A, according to Nicola Sturgeon, means her party "can move forward now with confidence to make the case for Scotland's future in Scotland's hands".

But the biggest threat now to our cash, of course, is Brexit. According to Gary Gillespie, the Scottish Government's chief economist – who is a civil servant, not a politician – a No-Deal Brexit could slash 7% from GDP, cost us up to 20% of our exports to the EU and result in an economic slowdown that causes sterling to depreciate by 30%.

In that scenario, unemployment

could rise from less than 4% to anything between 5.5-8%.

And in that scenario, staying within the Union could be just like throwing your money away.

That won't stop No voices talking down the prospects of an independent Scotland, of course. The Tories think that Scotland, uniquely, has no viable currency option and can't share the pound, have an independent currency or use any other option. That position is self-evidently ridiculous.

Mervyn King, the former Bank of England Governor himself, said recently: "I myself don't think there are any major problems in terms of currency. That was the thing Project Fear focused on last time..."

WHAT TO SAY

Independence is not about any one person – it's about the choices which affect us being made in Holyrood and not Westminster. The Yes movement is much broader than the SNP and a new parliament for a new country means a new politics. Scots will decide who they want to run the country after a Yes vote. That might not be the SNP...



The National is a newspaper like no other – and we're investing in you

BY CALLUM BAIRD
NATIONAL EDITOR

HELLO! We hope you enjoyed reading this newspaper today. Perhaps you've never read The National before. Perhaps you'd never even heard of us. Or maybe whoever gave you this paper today has been badgering you about us for years. If so, then we're sorry about that!

Or you might be one of our incredible loyal readers who continue to make us the **ONLY** newspaper in the whole of the UK which is increasing its print sales.

The National is a newspaper which believes in Scotland – in its potential, its people, its economy and its place in the world. We've got a positive message to tell – and that's why thousands of people are signing up to

support our journalism. We now have more than 7300 subscribers (and that number is growing all the time). Last month, a record 900,000 people visited our website at least once.

We hold regular roadshows in which we take popular columnists out across Scotland to talk directly to readers. We produce podcasts, videos, graphics and Facebook Live broadcasts.

We're not just a newspaper for Yes voters – but we are a newspaper for those willing to engage honestly about the case for independence.

This is just the second of a series of new monthly supplements about Scotland's future. We want to explore all aspects of our country's life, culture and the economy and how it might be affected by independence. And we won't shy away from difficult questions or talking about the challenges of

becoming a new country – but we will be clear about the long-term benefits of decisions which affect the people in Scotland being taken in Holyrood and not Westminster.

Scotland is being led by Prime Minister Boris Johnson – elected by 0.2% of the UK population. Johnson has said that a pound spent in Croyden is better than a pound spent in Strathclyde. He said a Scot could never be a Prime Minister of the UK because of our "political disability". We don't know when the next referendum on independence will happen – but we need to make sure we're ready for it when it does.

We're a newspaper with a mission – we have faith that Scotland can take its place in the world as an independent country again.

And we're committed to investing all we can to make that happen.

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