

Delaying Scottish Independence: Examining the Reasons behind the SNP's Loss

تأخير الاستقلال الاسكتلندي: دراسة الأسباب الكامنة وراء خسارة الحزب

الوطني الاسكتلندي

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Abstract:

The potential for Scotland to become an independent state was postponed to an unspecified future by the rejection of the independence proposal in the 2014 referendum. Since then, a number of observers have looked into the causes of this rejection. While some point the finger at the Scottish National Party's (SNP) lack of ability and its feeble "Yes" campaign, others denounce the British media's handling of the referendum, claiming it tried to sway public opinion in order to further unionist objectives and maintain Scotland's membership in the union. This article, however, contends that the partial or, more accurately biased role of British media coverage during the referendum campaign contributed to the number of Scots who were already sceptical of the idea of independence because they anticipated an uncertain political and economic future for Scotland outside of the United Kingdom.

Key words: Scottish National Party (SNP), 2014 Independence Referendum, British Media, Devolution.

Introduction:

A national referendum in 2014 asked the people of Scotland if they would like to become an independent nation. By a slim margin, the majority of voters chose to stay in the United Kingdom over becoming independent. This result sparked a great deal of scholarly and political discussion among observers who were trying to figure out how the referendum worked and what variables affected the choices made by the voters.

This article looks at the difficulties Scotland encountered in 2014 when it gained its independence. It makes a strong case that the Westminster administration's widespread advertising, which promoted the notions that Scotland gained more from being a component of the United Kingdom (UK), and the UK was powerful when Scotland was included, was the main cause of the challenges encountered that year. Instead of merely supporting the union, the British state, as vividly shown in media narratives, profited from the promotion of an ambiguous and uncertain post-independence future for Scotland, causing many Scots to become doubtful and anxious about the prospect of breaking away.

The underlying hypothesis of this study is that the media's portrayal of the referendum either had a detrimental impact on the outcome or aided in the ballot's failure. Some critics blame the failure on the "Yes Scotland" campaigners' inability to win over voters, while others highlight

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the important role played by the British media. It implies that the skewed media narratives, especially those who were already apprehensive about the possibility of Scottish independence, may have influenced voters' decisions.

Actually, fear of the results and repercussions of independence was a major factor in the Scottish people's decision to vote "no" for complete independence. During the referendum campaign, British tabloids and networks dug deep into this anxiety. If Scotland leaves the Union and the EU, many analysts and spectators openly predicted a dark era for the country's economy. However, the Brexit outcome of 2016 provides the clearest proof that any country, including the United Kingdom, can leave the European Union without suffering disastrous economic consequences.

In order to study the British media's role in manipulating the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, this research is primarily based on the selection and interpretation of the most recent British laws, parliament bills, acts, and publications, in addition to scholarly articles and research. The study employs interpretative and qualitative research methodology, typically concentrating on political discussions regarding Scottish independence on BBC television prior to and following the referendum, along with analyses of the referendum's outcomes in national and international press reports.

The study employs interpretative and qualitative research methodology, typically concentrating on political discussions regarding Scottish independence on BBC television prior to and following the referendum, along with analyses of the referendum's outcomes in national and international press reports. At this stage, discourse analysis is employed as a method since the data collected necessitates consideration of the narratives and language employed. Historical analysis also addresses the Union of England and Scotland's historical development. The Union Act of 1707 came first, followed by the Scotland Act of 1998, which established the Scottish Parliament and Executive, and the stunning win of the SNP in 2011; and finally, the 2014 independence referendum.

This article's primary goal is to analyse the intricate relationship that exists between voter choice and media coverage of independence-related issues during the 2014 referendum. It clarifies how opinions on Scotland's political and economic prospects outside of the union may have been influenced by media objectivity. After a thorough analysis of the circumstances, it is determined that the demands for independence and separation are just requests for a return to the pre-union era rather than a novel movement exclusive to the SNP.

After decades of union, is Scotland determined to regain its sovereignty? Since it joined England with complete autonomy, can it revert to its former position without mentioning England? Why is it harder for Scotland to secede from the union than it is to stay in it? Must Scotland accept the union as a fatality? Given that Britain battled for its independence from the European Union in 2016, why is it so concerned about Scottish independence? The purpose of this article is to investigate the causes behind the defeat of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. It is hypothesized that the media openly backed the anti-independence campaign while misrepresenting the "yes" side. All of these questions are related to Scotland's quest for independence.

1-Historical Overview: From “Union” to “Devolution”

Political and economic considerations on both sides had made the merger a talking point since the late 17th century. In the face of economic hardship, Scotland looked to the union for stability, while England aimed to thwart any possible coalition between Scotland and France. Notwithstanding hostility and misgivings between the two countries, the union was viewed as a win-win situation that offered both countries political and economic stability. To commemorate the union's 300th anniversary, a two-pound commemorative coin was released in 2007. Understanding Scotland's relationship with England, its post-war history, its aspirations for more autonomy, the emergence of separatist sentiments, and the dynamics of the union are essential.

1.1- England and Scotland's Union in 1707

To grasp the progression of separatist ideas, the historical relationship between England and Scotland must be taken into account. After the parliaments of England and Scotland passed the Acts of Union, the United Kingdom of Great Britain was created on May 1, 1707. The first meeting of the UK Parliament took place in October 1707. A union between Scotland and England was discussed at the Convention Parliament's February and March 1689 sessions in Edinburgh. That time, the convention commissioners were unable to secure England's consent ("Union between Scotland and England?").

A second proposal for unification was presented to the House of Lords in 1695. Because of England's failing economy, the elites in Scotland were in favor of union with England, although their support was not strong. Nonetheless, in 1699, politicians from England and Scotland concurred that a union was necessary for mutual benefit. By 1700, a king-backed bill was presented at Westminster to discuss a possible union; it was defeated in the Lords and defeated by the Commons ("Union between Scotland and England?").

The merger had not been customary or easy between the two parties, especially for England, which seemed more cautious and doleful than Scotland. According to Ben Johnson, the 17th century saw a great deal of suspicion and mistrust between Scotland and England, which at the time separated them. Wales, as well as the Scottish side, interpreted the union for four centuries as nothing more than Scotland becoming a part of England. As the English side considered its own national security, which may be jeopardized should the Scottish form an alliance with the French and engage in military cooperation with them.

According to Johnson's historical perspective of the union, Scotland was forced to accept the union with England in order to prevent some sort of economic calamity. England agreed to the union in the interim in order to prevent French hegemony if it sided with Scotland. This suggested that the union was the best option for the Scots to get out of their economic bind and the best way for England to defend its territory against threats from Europe.

Since the latter satisfies both countries' needs and provides them with more political and economic security, neither Scotland nor England can be held accountable for having different motivations for the union question. Given that it takes into account the benefits of the union that both Scotland and England receive, this seems reasonable. This gives rise to the notion that, given that the union was founded 300 years ago on bilateral and reciprocal considerations, its dissolution must also adhere to the same standards in order to be achieved.

Furthermore, the 2014 Scottish independence referendum's failure serves as further proof that only Scotland is motivated to break away from the United Kingdom, whilst England is not and could be in danger if Scotland does. Therefore, England will take all required steps to support the union and put an end to the drive for independence. It will also attempt to postpone this by putting forth some alternatives to independence, such maximum devolution.

1.2. - Home Rule Status and the Rise of the SNP

Scottish home rule ambitions were strongly advocated by the Liberal Party who dominated Scottish politics for almost 50 years during the late 19th century. In fact, the home rule movement gained traction at the end of the century thanks to the support of liberals, whose leader, William Gladstone, had accepted the concept in 1885. In 1886, the Scottish Home Rule Association was founded, and from 1889 to 1914 parliament debated the question of Scottish home rule fifteen times and introduced four bills; one of them passed a second reading in 1913. When World War I broke out, the argument over Scottish home rule was ignored ("Early Scottish History..."). Consequently, the start of the war delayed the discussion of home rule, but nationalist organizations such as the Scottish National Party (SNP) were prepared to bring it back. The goal of the Scottish National Party's 1934 founding was to create a Scottish Parliament in the United Kingdom. After the party surpassed the Conservatives and endangered its historical status in 1974

with 11 seats, it became the first nationalist voice in Scotland (Gay 7). Does the SNP's growing popularity in the 1970s foreshadow the termination of the Union?

In reality, the ascent of the SNP does not denote that most Scots have become into separatists; rather, Scottish voters have chosen the British state over any nationalist initiative. The SNP's rise was actually caused by the Liberal and Labour parties' growing disinterest in home rule (Devine 14). Hence, the SNP's growing popularity resulted from the public dissatisfaction about home rulers and the increasing need for change. As a nationalist party, the SNP's first ambition and avocation was to establish a subordinate elected legislative body in Scotland and not total separation from the Union. Therefore, the quest for a Scottish Parliament may satisfy both nationalists and unionists since it will secure more autonomy for Scotland but within the assistance of the UK Parliament.

The SNP underwent a significant transformation from its founding in 1934 to the early 1960s, evolving from a party seeking support from major political groups to one with a clear vision and a commitment to challenging popular opinion with long-term objectives. Key figures in this transformation were Alexander MacEwan and John MacCormick, who promoted gradualism as a strategy to build interparty support that could eventually lead to devolution. MacCormick also played a key role in establishing a Scottish National Convention, where multiple parties gathered to discuss Scottish interests and the possibility of establishing its own government (Wilson 32-33). Scotland moved slowly but steadily towards the acquisition of a sovereign parliament from Westminster. What were the primary legislative and administrative processes that led to the establishment of a Scottish Parliament, and how long did it take to obtain devolution status?

1.3- The Victory of Devolution in 1998

Growing support for devolution in Scotland occurred in the 1970s, at the time of North Sea Oil discoveries. Since Scotland was guaranteed oil revenue, the economic problems around the notion of separation were less pressing. In October 1977, the Labour government under Callaghan introduced a Devolution Bill, which ultimately failed. In November 1977, a second measure with the "Cunningham amendment" or "40 percent rule" was introduced," which required that over 40% of the Scottish people take part in the devolution referendum so that it truly reflects the Scottish national voice. ("The Devolution Debate..."). The SNP's goal was made more difficult by the second devolution bill. It must not only persuade the Scottish electorate that devolution is necessary, but also motivate all Scots to cast ballots in the referendum, regardless of their political affiliation. Still, what precisely is devolution, and what will Scotland gain from it should the majority of voters support it?

The passage of the Scotland Act in 1978 gave the Scottish people more powers by allowing them to have three elected representatives for each constituency and two additional representatives for constituencies with 125% or less of the electoral quota. The idea of devolution gained traction within the Scottish political community. Nevertheless, before these concepts are implemented, a devolution referendum requiring the approval of 40% of the Scottish voters overall is required ("The Scotland Act 1978" 1).

As a result, the Scotland Act of 1978 forced the Scots to vote in a Scottish devolution referendum in order to gain the right to form a Scottish Assembly. On March 1, 1979, a referendum on devolution was conducted. Although only 33% of voters cast ballots, the majority of them (52%) chose to support devolution. However, the "Cunningham or 40% rule" was the reason the devolution plan was unsuccessful. The new Conservative government of 1979 gave Scotland's administrative government more authority and allowed Parliament to give special regard to Scottish issues in an effort to allay the national ire of the Scottish people. However, the 1987 General Election and the establishment of the Scottish Constitutional Convention (SCC) will bring about genuine change ("History of the Scottish...").

The convention's first official meeting took place on March 30, 1989, and all the major political parties in addition to business federations, Scottish major Churches and the Scottish

women's forum attended it. The convention meeting resulted in a list of declarations referred to as "A Claim of Right for Scotland." The SCC first meeting has successfully managed to stand for the sovereignty right of Scotland by claiming a fully independent Scottish Parliament and therefore moving towards self-governance instead of limited devolution ("Scotland's Parliament, Scotland's Right 3").

The Scotland Act of 1978 was nearly successful in creating a secured Scottish Assembly for Scotland, if it was the first meaningful step towards devolution. Another important step towards devolution was the SCC's "Claim of Right for Scotland" of 1989, which set expectations and affirmed the right of a self-governing Scottish Parliament to rule independently of the UK Parliament. The SCC approach needs parliament mobilization to realize its initial goals; will the UK Parliament approve a Scottish Parliament?

Seven years later, the SCC published another report entitled "Scotland's Parliament, Scotland's Right." This report was quite different from the first one not in content since it also claimed Scotland's right for its own parliament, but in tone. Indeed, it used a more assertive and bold rhetoric emphasizing the Scottish people's right to choose their own government in a democratic way ("Scotland's Parliament..." 9). Without weighing the opinions of the Scottish people, how could the SCC final report speak for them? The only method able to give an accurate answer about whether the majority of Scots are with self-government and an independent Scottish Parliament is a new referendum.

The New Labour government of 1997 organized a devolution referendum as the party promised during its electoral campaign. Unlike the previous referendum of 1979, the new referendum did not apply the 40% rule, it only needed the majority of electors to vote 'yes' for a Scottish Parliament. The Scottish people were asked to cast their votes on September 11, 1997, on two separate issues: the establishment of their own parliament and the transfer of tax-varying powers to it. Of the two concerns, the majority of voters accepted the Scotland Bill, allowing the parliament to pass it in December 1997 ("History of the Scottish..."). For more than fifty years, the people of Scotland were to be without a Scottish Parliament. What are the boundaries and how will this Parliament work with the UK Parliament is the key question?

The Scotland Act of 1998 set the limits of the Scottish Parliament. Consequently, the principal legislative provisions were enumerated in the Act's sections and sections. The establishment of a Scottish parliament granted the Scottish people greater authority over parliamentary elections and tax-varying powers, enabling them to levy and collect taxes without the UK Parliament's approval ("Scotland Act 1998" 1).

The Scottish parliament will allow the formation of a Scottish government composed of ministers nominated by the first minister, as well as a solicitor general and lord advocate. The Scottish government assumed full responsibility for the Secretary of State for Scotland's duties after the 1999 elections, and in July of that year, the Scottish Parliament met for the first time ("Devolution Settlement: Scotland").

Scotland's first elections spread over the world. The Scottish people cast ballots to select their own representatives to the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) and government for the first time since the union in 1707. One hundred and twenty nine representatives attended the Scottish parliament. The first election saw a Labour landslide victory with fifty-six (MSPs), and only thirty-five for the SNP (Denver and MacAllister 1-2).

To sum up, devolution in the UK is seen as transition from administrative autonomy to legislative autonomy, distinct from the US federal or German structures. A new Scottish legislative body was to get powers from the Scottish Office under the Scotland Bill of 1978. The "Cunningham Amendment" was the reason the 1979 referendum failed, even with 51.6% of voters voting "yes." A Scottish Parliament was established because of the successful 1997 devolution referendum, which saw 74.3% of voters approve of the legislature's formation and 63.5% favor tax-varying powers. The 1998 Scotland Act created the Scottish government and outlined the

powers of Parliament. A major development since the Union of 1707 was the transfer of authority from UK ministers to Scottish ministers in the 1999 elections. There are 129 seats in the Scottish Parliament; Labour won 56 of them in the first elections.

2. - The 2014 Referendum: Reasons and Outcomes

The Scottish Independence Referendum, which was held on September 18, 2014, was a momentous occasion in modern British history. Regardless of the result, it is noteworthy because the SNP was able to convince Westminster to allow the Scottish Parliament to hold an independence referendum in order to determine whether the majority of Scots wished to secede from the United Kingdom after decades of agitation. In addition to an analysis and interpretation of the electorate's decision, the part that follows offers a brief historical account of the events leading up to and following the referendum, with an emphasis on the political, economic, and cultural ramifications of independence for the United Kingdom.

2.1. - A Retrospective Analysis

The Scottish Government, under the leadership of the Scottish National Party (SNP), was granted permission by the UK government to hold an independence referendum in October 2010. This agreement was subject to the requirement that there be just one, unambiguous question in the referendum, with a simple yes-or-no response. "Should Scotland be an independent country?" was the query posed (Crowther 165). As promised by the Scottish National Party in 2011, there will be a referendum on independence during the upcoming term of the Scottish Parliament. Once the SNP formed the administration, they requested to hold a referendum on independence. The UK government acknowledged the Scottish request ("Scotland's Right to choose...").

In January 2012, the Scottish Government launched a consultation detailing its plans for organizing, administering, and regulating the plebiscite. In order to guarantee that the referendum would be held in compliance with the strictest international standards, it put forth legislation in the Scottish Parliament. In the consultation, the Scottish Government committed to working with the UK Government to draft a referendum law that would be resistant to future legal challenges. The result of this cooperation was the October 2012 "Edinburgh Agreement," in which both governments stated their intention to give the referendum a strong legislative basis. Its enactment by the Scottish Parliament would gain the confidence of governments, parliaments, and the general public and provide a just and conclusive representation of the opinions of the Scottish people that would be widely accepted. Furthermore, the Edinburgh Agreement required the two administrations to cooperate positively after the referendum, which was scheduled for later in 2014 ("Your Scotland, Your Referendum...").

To round up, Scottish independence referendum was finally accepted by the UK Government in 2010 with the condition that the referendum would present a clear yes or no question on Scottish independence. The electoral victory of the SNP in 2011 further strengthened their quest for independence, which was promised in their manifesto. By 2012, the "Edinburgh Agreement" met with full collaboration of the UK government. How did these extensive preparations and the collaborative approach between the UK and Scottish governments affect popular trust in the legitimacy of the referendum? Scotland's voters were asked, "Should Scotland become an independent country?" on September 18, 2014. 2,001,926 votes were cast in favor of "No," while 1,617,989 votes were cast in favor of "Yes." The Electoral Commission confirmed that the referendum was conducted in an excellent manner, and the Scottish Government acknowledged the result ("Your Scotland, Your Referendum...").

Despite the referendum's failure, observers and academics recognized numerous positive outcomes that might be considered as achievements of the referendum experience. For example, Professor Crowther says that although the independence vote was not successful, there were important triumphs in terms of changing public opinion of the status quo. By September

2014, the percentage of people who supported voting "Yes" had risen from roughly 25% in 2013. The shift in the justifications for rejecting independence was as striking. Despite proposals for Scotland to have more devolved powers, 43% of those who were against change in 2013 remained in this position. By the referendum, this percentage had dropped to just 28%. Said another way, 72% of those who voted against independence also favored measures meant to give Scotland's Parliament more legislative authority. There was no longer a sense in which the status quo made sense (177).

The emergence of politicized autodidacts or politically engaged self-learners is another benefit of the referendum. These individuals utilize digital tools such as social media, the Internet, and email to share information, write blogs, explore diverse perspectives, and gain critical insights into mainstream political issues. This process of self-education creates a ripple effect as people engage in discussions and debates with their social circles, both personally on social media platforms and publicly through blogs and online communities. Indeed, more than 750 publicly accessible websites dedicated to the referendum had been registered by the National Library of Scotland. These platforms regularly updated their content, disseminated prejudiced information, and introduced a variety of topics for discussion and commentary (180-181).

It is astounding to see that, even in light of the "no" vote's victory, Scotland as a whole and the SNP in particular still saw the referendum as a success. The two main outcomes of the 2014 independence referendum are an increase in voter turnout and the rise of politically active self-learners who utilize digital media. Will this perspective become conventional, or is it a mere individual analysis. In other words, will the SNP accept the referendum results and shifts to another political alternative by refraining from the idea of independence?

2.2. - "Devo-Max" as Opposed to Independence

After the referendum results were announced on September 19, 2014, Lord Smith of Kelvin chaired a series of cross-party talks to identify a package of powers to be devolved, strengthening the Scottish Parliament within the United Kingdom, according to Prime Minister David Cameron's announcement that morning. The terms of Reference for Lord Smith's Commission were released on September 23, 2014, and state that the commission must set up interparty negotiations and supervise a thorough engagement process throughout Scotland in order to produce Heads of Agreement with recommendations for additional devolution of powers to the Scottish Parliament by November 30, 2014. A Command Paper released on October 31, 2014, served as the process's roadmap, and on January 25, 2014, draft clauses were released. The Smith Commission's recommendations aimed to give the Scottish Parliament in the United Kingdom more financial, welfare, and taxing power in order to strengthen it (8).

Lord Smith invited the parties to discuss what more powers the Scottish Parliament needs to be given. The "Smith Commission Agreement" refers to the package that the five political parties have agreed to give the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Ministers additional authority. These powers fall into three categories. The first is the establishment of a constitutional framework that is both flexible and stable for the governance of Scotland. Secondly, encouraging prosperity, a healthy economy, employment, and social justice; and thirdly, strengthening the Scottish Parliament's financial responsibility. All parties concur that Scotland should have a robust devolution framework that is flexible enough to adapt to the shifting demands and objectives of the Scottish people inside the United Kingdom. As such, extra authorities beyond those specified in the agreement were delegated to the extent that it would facilitate the implementation of the consensus reached in this report. Furthermore, it is understood that nothing in this report prevents Scotland from becoming independent of the UK in the future, should the Scottish people choose to do so ("The Smith Commission...", 9-12).

In conclusion, on November 27, 2014, the Smith Report—officially titled the Smith Commission Report—was released. Following the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum, then-Prime Minister David Cameron convened the Smith Commission, which produced this result.

Under the leadership of Lord Robert Smith of Kelvin, the Commission was entrusted with suggesting further powers for devolution to the Scottish Parliament in response to the UK government's promise to provide Scotland with greater autonomy should it decide to remain in the Union. It is true that the Smith Commission Report's recommendations were also known as "devo-max" or "devolution max," but this idea predates the independence referendum and was first used earlier.

In "Devolution Max: Charting a New Political Notion and Its Spread in Britain," Nathalie Duclos reports that the term "devolution max" (sometimes referred to as "devo max") was first used in an official document in November 2009. The SNP was included in a White Paper titled "Your Scotland, Your Voice" while it was a minority administration in Scotland. The SNP initiated a "National Conversation" on Scotland's constitutional future soon after they were elected to power in the Scottish Parliament in 2007, and this White Paper was the outcome. The consultation revealed that while support for complete independence was relatively low, many Scots favored "further devolution" or "enhanced devolution," which refers to an extension of the Scottish Parliament's jurisdiction inside the United Kingdom (2).

The concept of "devolution max" gained traction following the SNP's decisive win in the May 2011 Scottish Parliament election and subsequent establishment of a majority government. This result guaranteed an independence referendum, since the SNP announced in early 2012 that one would take place during the second half of the parliamentary term, with fall 2014 being the designated timeframe. When Prime Minister David Cameron addressed Scottish independence on national television and pushed SNP leader Alex Salmond to convene the referendum before 2014, the phrase "devo max" entered the British political lexicon (Duclos 3).

"Devolution max" refers to a kind of autonomy in which Westminster would continue to oversee foreign policy, defense, and maybe social security, but Scotland would be in charge of most or all domestic affairs and tax collection. Is it possible to actually execute this form of devolution, or is total independence the only path to further Scottish autonomy? Paul Cairney contends that Scotland is unable to accomplish "devo max"—the devolution of all powers outside of the United Kingdom, except from military and foreign policy. At the absolute least, the Bank of England would continue to be in charge of monetary policy and the UK Government would still be in charge of numerous fiscal policies. There is still uncertainty around the viability of "devo-max," which would necessitate protracted discussions with the UK government. The political, economic, and cultural effects of Scotland's exit from the union on the United Kingdom—primarily on England, Wales, and Northern Ireland—should also be taken into account. In the event of Scottish separation, some forecasts for Scotland and the UK are provided in the following section.

3. - Consequences of Scotland's Independence on the UK

Although not immediately evident to everyone, the referendum's significance for Scotland, which represents the country's possible path toward complete independence, implies political, economic, and cultural shifts for the United Kingdom. The political effects of Scottish independence were first discussed in a study by Jules Arts and Sander van de Ven titled "Scottish Secession: The United Kingdom of the Future," which focused on how it would affect England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. According to the study, it would be wise to establish equality between the three nations. This might be achieved by transferring all legislative authority over their respective regions to the National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly, and restricting the Westminster Parliament's powers to England alone. This strategy, meanwhile, begs the question of which organization would ultimately have ultimate authority over the full United Kingdom. Wales and Northern Ireland may achieve de facto independence if the Assemblies are granted full parliamentary status (11).

For the UK economy, the secession of Scotland is expected to shake both its GDP and revenues of natural resources, particularly oil and gas. However, this impact is not likely to be

severe enough to devastate the UK economy. The direct effect of Scottish secession would result in a GDP loss of about 233 billion USD which is equivalent to 11.3% of the UK's total GDP. Additionally, the UK government in London would face significant revenue loss from oil and gas extraction, as these resources are primarily located in Scotland. Culturally speaking, Scotland's departure is unlikely to significantly affect the international cultural importance of the United Kingdom. London's vast array of landmarks, museums, theatres, and other cultural attractions will maintain the UK's cultural and touristic value. Tourism to the UK is expected to remain largely unaffected by Scottish independence (12-13).

What are the possible implications of Scotland's secession on Scotland, if the United Kingdom's political system may be damaged and its gross domestic product and oil and gas revenues reduced?

4.-Consequences of Independence on Scotland

The Secretary of State for Scotland's 2013 report, the first in a series of papers examining the legal repercussions of Scotland's independence, presents independence to Parliament as a very different state for Scotland rather than a continuation of devolution. "Legally and constitutionally, independence is a totally different proposition," it adds unequivocally. Devolution would end with independence. Scotland is guaranteed a powerful role inside the UK because to devolution. Scotland's independence would mean giving up the advantages of devolution and leaving the UK ("Scotland Analysis: Scotland Devolution..." 6).

As said by the same article, there is little chance that a sovereign state like Scotland will instantly join the EU after gaining its independence. Nor would Scotland "inherit" the UK's opt-outs by default. The legal judgment concluded that as the remaining part of the country would have the same international rights and obligations as the current UK, the UK would continue to be a member of the EU ("Scotland Analysis..." 45).

In 2014, the Select Committee on the Constitution of the House of Lords published a report on the legal and constitutional requirements of an independent Scotland. The report used the Russian experience following the fall of the Soviet Union and Sudan's experience continuing as a state following the division of South Sudan to promote the idea that Scotland would become a successor state while the UK remains as the continuator state. The second reason is that the United Kingdom has greater legitimacy in terms of international law due to its 92% population and 68% present territory. The fact that most nations would deal with Scotland as a new entity is the third justification. Fourth, the discussion about splitting the United Kingdom into two new states is not national in scope, and Scottish independence is restricted to Scotland (Scottish Independence..." 7-8). Does Scotland feel the same way, or does it think otherwise?

The report, which left little opportunity for Scottish views in this area, underlined the dearth of documented evidence in Scotland specifically opposing this approach. Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon's comments, regarding the plan as a UK declaration, are the only ones that sum up the Scottish position. He cited Professors Crawford and Boyle's opinion, according to which agreements between the two administrations and the stance of other states resolve this matter in terms of international law. The select committee report also includes important perspectives from prominent scholars and commentators to support the argument that Scotland's independence will primarily affect Scotland itself, particularly its international reputation, while the UK stays unaffected. Those who expressed support for the report, including Professor Alan Boyle, Professor Stephen Tierney from the University of Edinburgh, and Professor Michael Keating, Chair in Scottish Politics at the University of Aberdeen completed a written questionnaire. David Torrance and Mandy Rhodes, two commentators, agreed with the approach, while Alex Massie pointed out that the viewpoint reflected common sense and was probably held by most people worldwide. "The club stays in place even if you vote to leave it," he continued (8).

Therefore, the report made it abundantly evident that, in contrast to the rest of the UK, Scotland would have to immediately proceed with major political reforms in the event that a "yes" vote for independence was obtained. It made clear that Scotland would need to go through possibly drawn-out discussions for all issues since it lacked the legal framework and instruments required to operate fully as an independent state. It became quite evident that independence is a phase that Scotland will experience if it decides to leave the union. Throughout the referendum campaign, the British mainstream media firmly supported this political rhetoric.

5. - British Media's Manipulative Narratives on Scotland's Independence

The influence of media on people's decisions and perspectives is widely acknowledged in academic circles. People often rely on television news or newspapers to stay updated on presidential elections, campaigns, and significant political, economic, or cultural events within and outside their countries. However, while doing so, they are often guided towards certain viewpoints that authorities want them to adopt. This guidance comes from national channels and newspapers, as well as private political or business entities that control various communications means to sway public opinion.

A prime example of this is the Scottish independence referendum of 2014, which demonstrated the media's effective influence on decision-making through the strategic use of communication theories and plans. To understand the evidence supporting this claim, it is essential to first explore the primary theories of media effects, which highlight the power of media in shaping political public opinion.

5.1. - Media Effects' Theories: Agenda Setting, Framing and Priming

Most perspectives in the fields of communication and journalism agree that the primary media effects theories employed in shaping public opinion on political matters are agenda setting, framing, and priming. Framing involves the media's capability to influence how audiences interpret information by emphasizing certain aspects of reality while downplaying others. Agenda-setting theory influences the public agenda by determining which issues are discussed. Priming refers to the media's role in shaping the criteria people use to make judgments (Borah 5-9).

From another perspective, while agenda-setting focuses on the prioritization of issues through frequent reporting, framing addresses how the media presents an issue within a specific context. This strategic placement of a topic within a certain field of meaning significantly affects public decision-making. In other words, whereas agenda setting is concerned with the prominence of an issue's attributes, framing encompasses a wider range of cognitive processes. It not only highlights the problem but also involves making moral judgments and suggesting implicit solutions (Praveen 9).

David Weiss also suggests that framing and priming theories are by-products of agenda-setting theory. It notes that although agenda setting originally explained the media's influence on political behaviour and attitudes during election years, it has inspired many studies on how media and other institutions prime and frame issues and events for their audiences, thereby inducing and shaping public opinion, either intentionally or unintentionally. Central to this expansion are the concepts of priming and framing, which McCombs and other theorists consider natural extensions of agenda setting. Just as priming a pump prepares it to work efficiently, the repetition and prominence of a media message about a topic prime our thoughts about that topic. This makes the topic more salient and immediately available to memory. As certain issues are primed, our attitudes toward those issues and their attributes also affected (2-3).

As previously stated the main media effects theories are agenda-setting, framing, and priming, all three theories are used by the media to shape public opinion on political matters either by highlighting certain issues what is referred to as agenda-setting, presenting them in specific

contexts which is framing, or making them more salient in peoples' minds which is priming. The above section also highlighted how media coverage interacts with audience predispositions, emphasizing that media effects are shaped by the audience's existing beliefs and sensitivities.

5.2. - "Yes Scotland" and "Better Together" in the Lens of Press and TV

In December 2013, the Electoral Commission began registering campaign organizations. By April 2014, it had officially recognized "Yes Scotland" and "Better Together" as the main campaign groups. These organizations served as umbrellas, each with a board comprising politicians from various parties. Dennis Canavan, a former Labour MP and MSP, chaired Yes Scotland, while Alistair Darling, a former Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, led Better Together. Both Canavan and Darling played significant roles, although the SNP leadership predominantly drove the Yes campaign, and Prime Minister Cameron was mostly kept out of the campaign. From the beginning, independence supporters were aware that they would be significantly outspent by their opponents and that press coverage would heavily favor the "No" campaign (Blain et al. 4-5).

In this respect, Crowther argues that the debate over Scottish independence occurred within a hostile environment of corporate, political, and mainstream media favouring the union. He points out that, with the exception of The Sunday Herald, the majority of print media in the UK and Scotland were against independence. This indicates that the unionist viewpoint was favored and bolstered by reputable viewpoints from journalists, scholars, and critics, whereas the cause for independence received little credible attention in the popular quality press. He comes to the conclusion that the primary BBC television broadcasts during this time were strongly biased. There were more anti-independence speeches and broadcasts, which frequently emphasized the financial risks associated with independence, such as rising costs, closing factories, and a reduction in local services. Additionally, bias was evident in subtler ways, such as using non-impartial sources and personalizing and demonizing the SNP leader (175).

Framing and agenda-setting theories were evident in the extensive "Better Together" news coverage and the marginalization of the "Yes Scotland" perspective. Priming theory was utilized in interpreting the economic, political, and cultural implications of independence, highlighting negative outcomes like price increases, factory closures, reduced local services, border issues, international rejection, exclusion from the European Union, and losing the euro. The Scottish audience, predisposed to these beliefs, made it easier for the media to set, frame, and prime the "No or Better Together" narrative. The following provides concrete evidence to support this assumption.

5.2.1. - The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)

Many academics and observers became interested in the BBC's coverage of the Scottish referendum campaign because it was the first channel in the UK to be viewed. For example the analysis of Dr. John Robertson came to conclude that the BBC had given less airtime to the 'yes' campaign in comparison with the 'better together' campaign. This conclusion was deduced after examining the TV coverage of the two campaigns from September 17, 2012 to September 18, 2013 by the evening broadcast from 6 to 7 pm. The survey found that mainstream TV coverage during the first year of the independence referendum campaigns was neither fair nor balanced, based on the objective evidence that was offered. Overall, the data suggests that the "Yes" campaign was probably harmed by the publicity ("BBC Bias and the Scots ...").

British media's coverage of the "yes" and "no" campaigns revealed attempts to sway public opinion in Scotland. Thousands of protestors assembled at the BBC office in Glasgow four days prior to the referendum, accusing the corporation and its political editor of disseminating false information and showing bias in favor of preserving the union. The demonstrators vehemently denounced the BBC for failing to accurately depict the potential victory of a "yes" vote on D-day and emphasized that Mrs. Robinson, the political editor of the BBC, had

collaborated with the Treasury to spread false information regarding the potential economic difficulties associated with an independent Scotland (Green, *The Independent*).

Ben Riley-Smith from *The Telegraph* asserted that Westminster advised Scots to disregard anonymous sources suggesting they could keep the pound post-independence. The article quoted Defence Secretary Philip Hammond, who argued against a currency union with a separate Scotland, citing economic impracticalities due to insufficient fiscal and political integration. Simon Johnson of *The Telegraph* reported that BBC presenters' impartiality came under scrutiny. He highlighted Andrew Marr's anti-independence stance, openly expressed during an interview with Scotland's Prime Minister, Alex Salmond. Marr's comments, suggesting it would be challenging to an independent Scotland to join the European Union, were seen as a breach of BBC guidelines. Salmond reacted strongly, questioning whether Marr's views represented "the Andrew Marr analysis" or the "BBC's official stance."

Alex Salmond was asked if he thought the BBC's coverage of the referendum was unfair during an interview with *The Sunday Herald*. Salmond claimed that the BBC is blatantly prejudiced and that it is unaware of its bias. He also said that anywhere else, in any other democracy, the referendum would have been covered in an impartial way and impeccably. George Monbiot also criticized the biased media coverage in both Scottish and British national media. With the exception of the *Sunday Herald*, he noted that one notable feature of the Scottish referendum is the lack of any local, regional, or national publication that is pro-independence, whether in English or Scottish. As a result, Scottish voters who lean "yes" have received very little media coverage.

"Better Together 'tipped off' on BBC debates," according to an article published in *The Sunday Times*, stated that "Better Together" was informed ahead of time of the discussions. The piece, which was published on July 20, 2014, examined how the BBC handled the independence referendum and included emails that a senior member of Mentor Media sent to an organizer of the "Better Together" campaign, alerting them to impending arguments on "Question Time."

BBC biased coverage of the referendum campaign had also been revealed by many journalists working within the corporation. This admission of guilt offered the BBC's claim of responsibility for the referendum's failure greater validity. *The Independent* conveyed the view of previous BBC news night Paul Mason who on his Facebook page Mason overtly said that he had not seen such propaganda in the BBC since the Iraq War, and that he is so happy that he is no more working in the corporation. Moreover, in another post on Twitter Mason accused the BBC of being totally biased and unbalanced in its referendum reports.

5.2.2. - National and International Press

Gerry Hassan supports allegations of the mainstream media bias and anti-independence rhetoric especially with the absence of newspapers supporting the idea of Scottish independence since most media regularly presented negative stories about the Scottish independence. For example, on 29 April 2012, the *Scotland on Sunday* newspaper described an independent Scottish state as a terror risk, whereas *The Times Scotland Edition* on 23 April 2012 compared a Scottish state to Greece, referring to the economic risks of independence on Scottish economy.

Even international press diffused anti-independence news; *The New York Times* on 27 March 2013 published an article advising the Scottish voters to think twice before voting for independence. *The Daily Telegraph* in turn reaffirmed the *New York Times* view and on 28 March 2013 published an article asserting that the *New York Times* has warned the Scots to rethink about the whole idea of independence. The American journal *Foreign Affairs* opposed Scottish independence, and in one of its articles criticised the whole process of independence for Scotland and described it as a shameful step, which will hinder the union and leads to territorial separatism.

The *Herald* as a national newspaper, and the *Press and Journal* as a local newspaper addressed the Scottish referendum in two distinct methods. Most articles of the *Herald* included argument in favour of independence, while the *Press and Journal* maintained a more neutral

stance, with a balanced number of articles including arguments for and against independence. The economic implications of independence were the most frequent themes discussed across all periods mainly by the anti-independence camp. The second theme was the European Union, which was used by both pro-independence and pro-union especially in the post-Brexit vote. The third theme was freedom and democracy, the frequency of this theme increased frequently over time particularly with pro-independence stance, it mainly focused on the right of Scotland of self-determination and opposition to Westminster control (Rento 19-20).

Whether television or newspapers, most anti-independence narratives aimed at stopping the secession of Scotland from the UK by emphasizing the economic risks and dangers of independence. Scotland is depicted as the loser in this scenario, while the UK is portrayed as unaffected. Examining media effect theories used by mainstream media reveals that agenda setting, framing, and priming were employed to convince Scots of the drawbacks of independence. As evidenced by the "Better Together" campaign, which was at the forefront of the government's agenda from the beginning of the referendum campaign, these theories suggested that Scotland would be better off remaining in the union and supported the idea of a cooperative British Parliament willing to grant the Scottish Parliament more powers.

Conclusion:

From the union at the beginning of the 18th century to the devolution movements in the late 20th century and the independence referendum in the 21st century, the political relationship between Scotland and England has undergone a historical journey. For Scotland, the union was a symbol of economic stability and for England; it was a symbol of border security. However, the changing parameters especially for Scotland generated nationalist voices who related the prosperity of Scotland both politically and economically with autonomy and self-rule which gave birth to the Scottish Parliament in 1999.

Scotland nationalists, led by the Scottish National Party, saw a sea change in their history when the Scottish Parliament was established. They were able to persuade the UK government that Scotland should become independent rather than have as much devolution as possible. The Scottish people were granted the opportunity to hold their first independence referendum on September 18, 2014, thanks to the Edinburgh Agreement. Although the referendum did not lead to independence, it did present a chance for change and questioned the three centuries of historical union between England and Scotland.

Immediately the failure of the 2014 referendum, British Prime Minister David Cameron called for a national consultation showing the UK government desire and commitment to offer Scotland's more autonomy and self-governance without completely detachment from the union. The national consultation, which came to be known as the Smith Commission engaged in extensive cross-party discussions and public debates and came to recommend that the Scottish Parliament must get substantial devolution powers including financial, welfare, and taxation responsibilities. The Smith Commission was recommending "maximum Devolution" or "devo-max."

Nevertheless, the realization of "devo-max" is extremely difficult within the current political framework, and it will drag the two parliaments into long-term negotiations over issues such as monetary and fiscal policies tightly controlled by the UK government. Additionally, "devo-max" did not fully satisfy the aspirations of complete independence camp. Thus, "devo-max" provided a middle ground by encouraging autonomy without dissolving the union, but it also entails years of discussions and talks that might not produce a favorable outcome, meaning that Scotland will continue to operate under the status quo.

Though it is still a long way off, Scotland's independence has significant political, economic, and cultural ramifications for the whole union. The current structure of the union will be significantly impacted if Scotland leaves the union. The union will be limited to England, Wales and Northern Ireland and this may necessitate a new governing system such as the creation of a

federal state. In addition, the economy of the UK may suffer from a notable GDP loss and a relative reduction in oil and gas revenues. Internationally, the United Kingdom will keep its cultural significance with its historic sites in the capital London.

Independence implies extensive legal and political reforms for Scotland. As highlighted by influential academics, and explained in various reports, including the House of Lords' 8th report, the transition to a fully independent state would involve complex negotiations, particularly concerning asset division, international status, and EU membership. Scotland would become a successor state, placing additional legal and diplomatic challenges on Scotland alone, with the UK remaining the continuator state.

The debate over the economic and political implications of Scottish independence did not remain limited to the academic and political spectrums; it gained prominence within the British national press and television. The newspapers and television commentators, whose analysis seemed to serve more the unionist voices and prime the public to fear and hate the idea of independence, were shaping the Scottish public opinion.

A notable disparity in media representation was discovered when the "Yes Scotland" and "Better Together" campaigns during the Scottish independence referendum were examined in the newspapers and on television. Influential media outlets like the BBC demonstrated blatant media bias by programming television shows in an unequal manner between the "yes" and "no" camps. This prejudice was demonstrated by the narrative framing, which downplayed and ignored the arguments made by the "Yes Scotland" campaign in favor of highlighting the economic and social risks of independence.

The irresistible media endorsed the unionist programme and formed a positive public perception of the union by promoting a negative perception of independence. Both Dr. John Robertson and Jim Crowther's reports and protestors' emphasis on the media's major influence on the referendum's discourse revealed the skewed coverage in the media. Even the international press used rhetoric that consistently undermined the independence movement. Headlines and editorials often framed Scottish independence as a big mistake and gave prominence to the unionist perspective. Therefore, the lack of support for independence from any major newspaper further isolated pro-independence voices.

The majority of the printed media, with the Herald being the exception, promoted the union and used derogatory narratives about the economic hazards and being left out of the European Union. The widespread negative exposition to negative framing influenced the public opinion, and created an unbalance between the two opposing campaigns giving more chance to the "Better together" than "Yes Scotland."

In conclusion, the British media played a detrimental role in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum by shaping public opinion in favour of the unionist view by perfectly employing the media effects theories of agenda-setting, framing, and priming. By doing so, the press and television succeeded in maintaining the union of Scotland and England, which was almost ended by the SNP in the 2014. This leads one to the conclusion that balance and partiality are simply falsehoods and that the media's influence over public opinion cannot be questioned.

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