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Scotland should claim its seat at the EU and become a true nation of the world

I have always been puzzled listening to otherwise educated and levelheaded Scots heap opprobrium on their country's right to sovereign self-determination just to fit into a concept of a 'united kingdom'.

Such a stance has always struck me as odd. The early 18th century Acts of Union that put into effect the Treaty of Union and in turn led to the establishment of the United Kingdom of Great Britain is a most archaic form of suzerainty.

It is a political anachronism at odds with the demands and interests of modern day Scotland.

Why would I say anachronism? Well, with all due respect to historical traditions, we should be under no illusion that the Acts of Union originally represented little more than an exercise in pacification and a prelude to empire.

The whole process subsumed Scottish self-determination, and later many others in its wake, to the imperatives and service of empire. Granted, this proto-imperial blueprint has adapted along the way and brought many benefits to Scotland, but we cannot, neither should we, ignore the fact that the formative basis of 'consent' was iniquitous.

Questionable foundations and the subsequent capricious functioning of this unusual construct of convenience are surely sufficient grounds to seek an annulment. If we add in

the spectacular decline of the British Empire since World War II, it becomes self-evident that Scotland's status vis-à-vis what is a most peculiar form of political rule is no longer acceptable.

Please, sway me with a credible argument to the contrary, but why is it that so few find what I am about to say an unsurprising anomaly? How is it that an individual is allowed to represent Scotland passionately at international sport with the saltire flying high and Flower of Scotland ringing in their ears, but when it comes to having a vote at the United Nations or membership of the European Union, or even the most basic declaration of their nationality on the drop down box of any online application from passports and visas to bank accounts, Scotland is all of a sudden missing from the equation?

My overseas friends are often perplexed as to why some Scots display a sort of bipolar national psyche and remain complicit in their country's own relegated status. On the one hand, they see the gallous patriotism and on the other, this dour trepidation towards self-determined autonomy.

They are left wondering what accounts for such a schism. The unpalatable explanation, if we are honest, is that despite genuine and deep-seated bonds to nation, the issue of sovereign political statehood has hovered like an unanswered question mark over Scotland's national standing for too long.

A form of entrenched cultural cringe and resigned acquiescence runs deeper than many would like to admit. No matter how Scottish you think you are and no matter how proud that makes you feel, Scotland is not a nation state. And by that I mean a genuine, sovereign nation state.

It is the political elephant in the room par excellence. Everyone knows something largely unacknowledged and bit ersatz is going on but they can't quite pin it down. It is as if an elaborate ruse has played out over the centuries to keep Scots wedded to a political arrangement they never really had a choice about in the first place.

The situation has been successively reinforced by a recurring phalanx of unionist pedagogues. Acting as 'voices of prudence', a motley array of monarchs, lairds, gentry, judges, press barons, political party apparatchiks and candlestick makers have silenced, discredited and not falsely, but shall we say inaccurately, dismissed anyone critical of Scotland's sovereign subalternism.

They have readily poured scorn on the idea of self-determination as dangerous jingoism whenever required, always on hand to reproduce a hegemonic discourse about the seeming inviolability of the union and Scotland's place in the order of things, their bruised

status-quo pride embodied in an assured quizzical tilt or invariably a sneering contempt for any fellow Scot entertaining ideas of self-determination.

You just have to watch and listen to the antics of the Scottish unionist parties and their associated media to understand what I am talking about. Their faux plaid-wrapped narratives are designed to obfuscate and disassemble the perception of Scotland's hamstrung status.

Maybe what I have just said is a bit much for genteel tastes but conflating calls for self-determination with parochial nationalism is most definitely wrong-headed. I am not making a pedantic distinction here.

Woodrow Wilson well knew that self-determination was one of the supreme political goods. When enough members of a nation display sufficient collective awareness to start calling for their self-determined statehood they are making a rational political demand.

Despite caricatures and scaremongering by status-quo forces, the Yes movement in Scotland is championing such a demand. We may live on an increasingly globalised and interdependent planet but sovereign nation states still operate as the primary units of territorial rule in world affairs.

Being an internationally recognised sovereign nation state is an essential part of socio-economic and cultural development in the contemporary world.

The progressive and civic character of Scotland's aspiration is not seditious bluster but a common aspiration shared by countless peoples throughout modern history (51 United Nations member states in 1945, today 193).

In fact, the SNP's landslide victory in the devolved parliamentary elections of 2011 (something that was supposed to be an institutionally designed impossibility) and backed up in 2014 is not some flash in the pan protest vote, but rather a more telling expression of popular intent.

Even putting aside the 'miracle' of 2015 and the ebb of 2017, Scotland's long and dignified struggle for recognition gives great force to a need for profound change. It should be glaringly obvious that the 'arranged marriage' has run its course. The world has most definitely moved on and Scotland's status no longer best serves its interests.

If we are to speak truth to this situation, there is no more reason for Scots to identify with moribund political constructs than, say, Catalans, Kosovars, Kurds or Quebecois.

As Benedict Anderson rightly pointed out, all nation states are, to an extent, "imagined communities". The Yes movement is re-inventing and re-imagining a different political future than Scotland's current political status affords.

The advent of devolution inadvertently introduced a political grammar of self-determination that has reignited the imagination of many Scots. This has precipitated a shift in entrenched attitudes about Scotland's place in the configuration of the UK.

It has destabilised ingrained sensibilities about the subordination of Scotland's national aspirations to the interests of this particular union. The psychological grip once exerted by unionist pedagogy is slipping and even the tired old scaremongering about Scotland's inability to prosper once separated from the yolk of the united kingdom simply looks like the paper tiger it always was.

Whatever the time scale, the political process in Scotland is transforming popular demands into nation state realisation. The re-mapping of Scotland's socio-political landscape has already locked in new co-ordinates to a different future - one that is now not only possible, but currently on her way.

All the talk about whether Scots keep the Queen as titular head of state or the pound sterling as a national currency are largely distractions from the much bigger game: the complete end of Westminster rule over the territory that constitutes Scotland.

The most legitimate political vehicle for this to occur is the declared constitution of a self-determined and sovereign state. What is even more encouraging is that there is no necessity to state build afresh in Scotland. It already possesses its own home-grown parliamentary, judicial, educational and financial institutions. Nor is there any need or desire to sever the social, cultural or economic relations with our nearest and dearest neighbours.

The suggestion that a sovereign independent Scotland would struggle to defend itself or fail to meet its international commitments is condescending in the extreme. How would it afford it? Well, pretty much the same way every other industrially developed country does.

That is, unless you are of the opinion that Scotland is a backward, dependent freeloader.

The alarmist doubts over European Union membership are also disingenuous exaggerations. If a formal application is called for as a matter of EU process (more than likely), Scotland already meets and fulfils the EU's own application criteria.

Although the EU membership path is not completely signposted in procedural terms, on both a political and practical level, Scotland is not applying from a position of accession uncertainty.

It satisfies the Copenhagen criteria and implements in full the *acquis communautaire* (the accumulated body of EU legislation that a country must adopt to become an EU member). This reality does not suddenly change with independence.

There is little or no reason for any current EU member state to reject Scottish membership on the grounds of not meeting the EU's own membership criteria. It more than conforms, I dare say better than some current EU member states.

Negotiated amendment to exiting treaties would be the most sensible option for all parties concerned. In fact, as we have now lamentably witnessed, the far greater risk to EU membership was by voting to remain part of the UK.

The major political and economic fallout of Scotland being taken out of the EU against its will by a hard Brexit lends great weight to self-determined choice. A process of negotiating membership entry could begin as soon as there was a referendum vote of free choice on EU membership and Scotland adopting independent statehood.

Of course, only the naive would assume or expect things to be all roses but there are never iron clad guarantees in life and anything worth doing takes calculated risk and hard work. A healthy number of Scots already know intuitively there is far more to gain than there is to lose.

For those naysayers still thrwn enough to call it unthinking nationalist myopia that has little or no chance, get over yourselves. Seriously, there comes a point when stubbornness looks churlish. To deny incessantly that Scotland has the right to pursue its self-determined potential within a wider integrated Europe is the same level of thinking that keeps you tied to a post when all you have to do is lift the post.

Surely even the most ardent defender of the status quo must realise the game is up. It will take courage, imagination and no small amount of good fortune, but Scots should embrace the prospect of a significant release of economic and creative energies.

Scotland deserves finally to take its seat at the EU and among the society of states at the UN, whatever that may hold. The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Croatia have done it, why can't Scotland?