

Opinion: The future state of the Union



I consider myself, before political bias, a social libertarian.

Whatever the political allegiance of the candidates, my vote usually ends up going to whoever offers me the closest thing to freedom, allowing me to live my life in the way I choose and unshackled by the chains and straight jackets of unnecessary law and legislature.

I think there is a general trend towards social libertarianism in British, and particularly Scottish, political thinking. I reckon we were all pretty appalled by Republican candidate Rick Santorum's policies to govern people's love lives. It is important in elections, and particularly in the very important one we'll have in 2014, to think of all the possible implications your vote holds; and so I feel it is important to point out some things that seem to have slipped by the main Independence discourse.

The biggest elephant in the Independence room is the state of the New Britain sans Scotland. The most immediately worrying is the political state of Westminster once the 53 Scottish seats are removed. It has been a matter of great amusement that there are now more pandas in Scotland than Tory MPs, (although now a bit well-worn! Ed.) but if the Union were to separate, the loss to Labour of their 41 MPs and the loss to the Liberal Democrats of their 11, as well as the subtraction of the 53 Scottish seats from the total, would mean that the 306 Tory seats were enough for a majority. Generally speaking, and barring a 1997-esque landslide, newly independent Scotland would potentially find herself with a permanently Conservative

southern neighbour.

The possible implications for the rest of the Union are also interesting, as a successful independent Scotland could seal the deal for Welsh independence. It surprises me that I haven't read much about this in the Independence coverage, especially as a part of the Labour 'No' campaign. An independent Scotland would be a death sentence for Labour in Westminster.

The other matter which has received press coverage, and rightly so, is the state of British nuclear-equipped submarines stationed on the Clyde. The SNP has not made their position clear but probably will do so in the full agenda which is promised. At present the Trident nuclear missile system represents Britain's independent nuclear deterrent in its entirety. A [Scotsman article](#) highlights the options.

As it stands, nowhere else in the UK is capable of berthing the submarines. An independent Scotland determined to banish the British military, would essentially eliminate the UK nuclear ability. The SNP is also still to announce their position on British nuclear submarines at Faslane, but if they insist on removal then my vote goes to full independence regardless of any other policy. Along with many others, I was sickened by the huge expenditure and the very real world-ending capability of renewal of the Trident system, and any policy that promotes slowing, stopping or reversal of nuclear arms creation gets my wholehearted support. The nuclear sword of Damocles which swings overhead needs to be removed permanently, and if the SNP choose this option they will have a unprecedented chance to disarm a nuclear nation. Just as an independent Scotland could increase support for an independent Wales, so could a disarmed Britain bring other nations round to the same sane realisation.

As a born-and-bred Scot, it has been hard not to get caught up in the romanticism of the Independence debate and focus on

facts and possibilities, and I'm still undecided myself as to how my vote will swing. If my ballot could help the world towards nuclear disarmament, the 2014 vote can't come quickly enough. It is in my view important to consider all of the implications of such a momentous decision and consider fates other than our own.

As it stands, an independent Scotland would change the UK political landscape, and if they really care about doing the right thing, could remove Britain as a nuclear power. Keep an eye on all the facts, as I am going to, and we can all make an informed decision come referendum day.