

TENDENCIES FOR SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE: PROS AND CONS

Scottish independence is a key issue in the Scottish parliament elections taking place on May 6, 2021. The Scottish National Party (SNP) has placed the issue at the center of its campaign. The party argues Westminster should accept a pro-independence majority as a valid mandate for a second independence referendum.

Scottish voters were first asked whether they wanted Scotland to become an independent country in a referendum in September 2014: the result was 55 % to 45 % against. The issue of independence has been put back onto the agenda by Brexit – Scotland voted 62 % to 38 % in favor of Remain in the EU referendum – and particularly once it became apparent that the UK government planned to take the UK out of the EU single market and customs union.

Scottish politicians have long claimed that their territory's resources have been used to benefit England more than the people of Scotland, and that Scotland has had too little say in its own governance. A vote for independence would put those arguments to rest. Scotland creates a large part of the UK's revenue. Most of the money, however, is siphoned off to Westminster and does not come back to the people who generated it in the first place. An independent Scotland would be able to use 100 % of the oil and gas revenue it creates.

Advocates of Scottish independence say that oil and gas revenue will make Scotland a very rich country and provide more than enough money to finance independence. If Scotland became independent all the British forces would have to leave, including the nuclear Trident submarines stationed on the Scottish coast. Thus, Scotland would have the chance to create a nuclear-free state and divert the funds used for the upkeep of a nuclear fleet to areas like housing, education etc.

Scotland has the highest potential in Europe to tap tidal and wave power. However, the UK government has chosen not to follow the EU's goals for renewable energies but focuses on nuclear and gas-fired power stations instead. Therefore, an independent Scotland would quickly become a new member of the EU and might even be allowed to join the Eurozone. Remaining in the UK would

mean Scotland would have to share the government's anti-EU policies although the country does not agree with them. An independent Scotland would have to decide on a lot of currency-related issues – keep the Pound in a currency union, or introduce the Euro? Whatever the decision, Scotland will not be able to decide alone. Either alternative might be vetoed by the UK or the EU.

Tendencies for Scottish independence are diverse, many people believe that going independent would spark off a renaissance of Scottish culture and self-confidence along with an increased international standing and global influence, but it is still a question of whether Scotland can get independence.