

I'm hugely excited at addressing the largest university on the planet, the University of the Arctic. Scotland isn't in the polar region of course but it shares with many northern countries a problematic relationship with larger neighbours and international organisations. Right now Scotland finds itself stuck uncomfortably between two Unions: the United Kingdom of which it has been a member for three hundred years, and the European Union of which it has been a member for forty three years. But not for much longer, perhaps. Scots have been forced to ask themselves the existential question: finally, ultimately, when all is said and done, is Scotland part of Britain or part of Europe. It can no longer be part of both.

So, what can history tell us? How did we get here?

The Sunday Post used to figure in the Guinness Book for Records as the newspaper with the highest saturation coverage of any in the world. A couthy, conservative, and sentimental publication, it was read by three fifths of the Scottish population in the as recently as the 1960s and the most read in it was the comic strip called the Broons. Now, famously the Scottish writer, Tom Nairn, said that Scotland would never be free until the last kirk minister was strangled with the last copy of the Sunday Post. People of my generation found it excruciating for its use of dialect words like “braw” “muckle” “hoose” “polis” “ken” which we associated with ignorance and parochialism. “A braw bricht moonlicht nicht the nicht” said the popular Scottish Entertainer of the early 20th Century, Harry Lauder,

in a phrase that made my toes curl. Like the wearing of tartan, people of my generation couldn't stand the synthetic Brigadoon image of Scotland presented by the popular media.

It was only much later that I realised that many of these dialect words that I found so objectionable are of broadly Nordic origin. Indeed, in 2015 when many Scots avidly watched the Danish/Swedish TV series, the Bridge, many found themselves inadvertently transported back to the land of the Broons. Saga Noren, the beautiful sociopathic detective, kept saying “braw” for good, “hoose” for house, “polis” for “police”. There's a whole range of words stoor, kye, een which used to be common in Scots everyday speech which derive from the north of Europe. Words like kirk, for church, originate from the Low countries as does “gang” to go and “ye ken” for you know, which is widely used in Edinburgh still and used to be intensely frowned upon when I was at schools.

Far from being parochial, these words that we found so irksome in the couthy Sunday Post were actually an expression of Scotland's outward-looking cosmopolitanism - linguistic remnants of a time when Scotland did not look south, to England and the British Empire, but looked East to northern of Europe - to Scandinavia, the Low Countries, the Baltics, Eastern Europe and Russia. My distaste for these words, I now realise, was an example of what some sociologists call cultural self-alienation, and what is called in Scotland the “Scottish Cringe”: a kind of revulsion at aspects of your own culture.

Now, I don't want to make too much of this, because of course, many English words have similar origins and many more Scottish dialect words originated in England. Nor am I complaining that Scotland was a victim of linguistic imperialism. We have enough culture wars raging across the English-speaking world right now without me adding a new dimension to identity politics. However, the language itself does testify to the fact that Scotland had been very much northern European nation since the middle ages, and indeed long before that. And it is my contention that it is today again at least as much of a European nation as it is part of Britain, though its future may not be.

When I visit these Denmark or Norway I am always struck by the similarities with Scotland from the dry sense of humour to the fondness for alcohol. As small cold northern countries, they share a certain communitarian ethos of mutual self-help and aversion to economic inequality. Taxation is not seen as theft, public investment is valued, the environment is protected above all and social services are well funded and admired. Even in terms of a certain emotional guardedness, a reticence in personal relationships and a lack of demonstrativeness. This is a characteristic that is called “dour” when applied to Scots. Andy Murray is the epitome of the dour Scot, a man of very few words who's laughter is strictly rationed; he speaks with his racquet.

In recent years organisations like Nordic Horizons have tried to link countries like Norway into the Scottish

Constitutional Debate. But I've also been aware that most Norwegians like other nordics regard Scottish nationalism with bemused indifference. The UK still generally referred to in Oslo as “England”, and the Scottish National Party is regarded as a truculent party of the political Right. Neither of which is correct. It is a fact of history that Scotland never ceased to be a nation in its own right after the 1707 Union with England, and the SNP is a civic nationalist party with a social democratic programme and supports increased immigration. It doesn't base citizenship on any racial or ethnic criterion and insists that anyone who lives in Scotland can be Scottish. And by the way I am not and never have been a member of the Scottish National Party.

The Crisis of the British state over Brexit ,and the UK's imminent departure from the European Union, has collapsed history and created a profound conflict in Scotland's civil society as it finds itself forced to choose between Britain and Europe, under the worst possible circumstances. In the 2016 EU referendum, Scotland voted by a margin of nearly two to one to Remain in the European Union, but finds itself taken out of Europe nevertheless because the UK as a whole voted, very narrowly, to leave. Only two years previously, in the Scottish independence referendum of 2014, Scots had voted slightly less narrowly to remain part of the United Kingdom. Many of those who voted No to Scottish independence believed the claim made by the British Unionist Better Together campaign that Scots could only remain in the European Union if they voted to remain in the United Kingdom. Well, we saw how that turned out.

If Scots had known that by voting to remain in the UK they were actually voting to leave the European Union, the result might have been very different in 2014. Indeed, research by Richard Marsh of the Scottish Centre for European Relations indicates that if the 300,000 odd EU nationals living in Scotland in 2014, had voted Yes rather than No, Scotland might have been an independent country today. Most of them voted No because they believed that a Yes result might leave them outside the EU.

Of course, we are where we are and we can't rerun history. Scotland just has to make the best of whatever deal is available to it under Brexit because there seems little likelihood of Scotland leaving the UK before Brexit. That would require another referendum and people here are so sick and tired of referendums that they just don't want to know. I'm going to discuss the present political situation - the constitutional implications of Brexit and Scotland's options – a bit later. But first I want to look a little more at Scotland's historic European focus, to perhaps understand why issues, such as immigration, which was the driving force behind Brexit south of the border, do not have the same resonance in Scotland.

As a poor, cold northern country, with acid soil and a difficult climate, Scotland's principle export throughout the ages has always been its people. Since the days of the Axe wielding Gallowglass, in the 13th Century, mentioned by Shakespeare in MacBeth, Scots acquired a powerful reputation for contract killing, and over the succeeding

centuries Scots could be found fighting other peoples' wars across continental Europe, from Northern Ireland to Russia; Scandinavia to Italy – some even ended up serving in the forces of the Ottoman Empire. Some of the longest standing private regiments were in France, where the Gens Ecossoise guarded kings until the French Revolution. Some 50,000 Scots fought in the 30 years war in the 17th Century, even though Scotland didn't declare war on Spain until the last moment. And of course Scots were heavily in Indian wars in the New World in the same period.

It wasn't all fighting. Scots merchants, medics, craftsmen, clerics also found their way to Europe in large numbers. Many of them made their way to Europe through Bruges in Flanders where they traded the one commodity early modern Scots had in abundance: wool. Melrose wool was considered of superior quality by Flanders cloth merchants. Thereafter, Scots exported raw materials like coal salt, hides and salmon and established trading communities across Europe in Denmark, Sweden in many cases following the trail led by the mercenaries. In the 17th Century, Poland was called “Scotland's America”. This mass migration of over 50,000 Scots is still recalled in the Polish phone book where you will find Scottish names like Ramsay and Chalmers. Danzig has many street names of Scottish origin like Skotna Gora and Dzkocja.

So Scotland had a distinctly northern European focus right up until the 1707 Acts of Union. This was partly geography. It was easier to navigate between Scotland and northern Europe than to travel south through the border

badlands to England and the trade routes reflected that. This is a 16th Century map, the Carta Marina, with Scotland at the bottom left, suggesting that Norway and Denmark are very much closer to Scotland than they actually are. Almost within hailing distance. And in a sense they were, because communication between Scotland and England was impeded by the fact that they were almost constantly at war between the 14th and 17th Centuries: from the Scottish Wars of independence to the invasion of Scotland by Oliver Cromwell, in 1650 after the English Civil War. This constant warfare was not good for business – though it was good for training mercenaries.

It was after 1707, with the Treaty of Union, and emergence of the United Kingdom as we know it today, that conflict ceased and Scotland started to look south to England rather than North East to Europe - really for the first time in half a millennium. The Navigation Acts were lifted allowing Scotland to participate in the burgeoning trade in the British colonies of India and the West Indies. Scots fanned out across the world, led once again, by the Scottish soldiers who now became, if you like, the shock troops of the British Empire, after they had been pacified following the 1745 Highland rebellion. From being a traitorous enemy the Highland soldier became within a generation transformed into the sharp end of the British Imperialism, celebrated by the English aristocracy for their fighting skills. Scots fought in the Union brigades against the French at the battle of Waterloo.

After the Union with England, Scottish merchants and

businessmen also shifted focus from Europe to the Empire and the great British trading houses, the East India Company, the Hudsons Bay Company and other imperial organisations that promoted commerce often at the point of a bayonet. The British Empire employed the products of the then superior Scottish education system, a byproduct of the reformation after which the Presbyterian kirk promoted literacy so that ordinary Scots could read the bible. They became surgeons, accountants and middle managers of the colonial administration. Scots missionaries like David Livingstone took the word of the Scottish Presbyterian Kirk to Africa, where he was singularly unsuccessful in converting bemused leaders of central African tribes.

Scots merchants like William Jardine and James Mathieson developed trade in the what was then called the Far East. Jardine Mathieson, which still exists today, made its fortunes in China and India trading silk and tea and above all selling opium to the Chinese. The lucrative opioid drug trade was described by William Jardine as “the safest and most gentlemanlike speculation I am aware of.” The Chinese didn't think so, as 90% of the coastal population of Canton became opium addicts thanks to Jardine Mathieson's enthusiastic drug pushing. The Chinese launched a war on drugs in 1839 and seized and destroyed valuable shipments of the poppy poison. Aghast at the loss of this business, William Jardine lobbied Lord Palmerston, who launched the Opium Wars to force China into accepting the drug trade.

This was hardly the most elevated example of post-

Union co-operation between Scotland and England, but it was a telling one. Here in the Opium Wars we see Scottish enterprise harnessed to British seapower – the essence of the Union. Scots were as keen to make money out of the British Empire as any Englishman. Scots tobacco and sugar merchants in Glasgow were also up to their necks in the slave trade, financing the transportation of slaves from West Africa to the West Indies and Virginia. Robert Burns himself, Scotland's greatest poet and spokesman for the common man even applied to be a manager of a slave plantation in Jamaica.

As Scotland shifted focus from Europe to the UK and the British Empire, Scotland's folk memory of its European age faded. However, Scotland's attachment to the Union remained very much a marriage of convenience. It was in many respects a commercial arrangement, and involved little sentiment, certainly among the ordinary people of 18th Century Scotland who saw little benefit from the colonial trade except increased taxation. But the Union worked. The 1707 Treaty, though derided by many at the time as a sell out by the “parcel of rogues” as Robert Burns called the Scottish nobles who gave up the Scottish parliament, was an enduring example of Enlightenment statesmanship. It ended centuries of very bloody conflict between England and Scotland by transmuting it into commercial competition. Historic enmities were forgotten in the common enterprise of making money.

But crucially in this period Scotland was not annexed by England in the Union in 1707, as many seem to believe, and

Scotland retained its distinct national identity located in the institutions of Scots law, the education system and the all important presbyterian church, the kirk as it is still known, which was the dominant civil institution in the 18th and 19th Century Scotland. When the rest of the world talked of England, they meant the UK; but Scots regarded themselves as part of Great Britain, a Union of nations, a multinational entity. The conjoined nations went on to fight together in two world wars. But the Union was very much a product of the British Empire, and when that Empire collapsed after the Second World War, the bonds of sentiment and mutual self-interest began to erode and Scotland began a long process of recovering political and economic autonomy, most notably in the restoration of the Scottish Parliament in 1999.

England's relations with Europe in the Age of Empire was rather different. England was the pre-eminent Imperial power after Waterloo. The British Empire at its height encompassed a quarter of the world's population. It was an Empire so vast that it was said that upon it the sun never set. The British Empire regarded itself as the pinnacle of human civilisation, and its leaders believed themselves to be a race apart, with a mandate to rule. A kind of racial Darwinism became widespread among all classes in Britain at the height of the British Empire. While racist attitudes have largely disappeared today, we can still hear echoes of British imperial exceptionalism still in the attitude of England towards the Europe after the Second World War. Britain was intensely reluctant to give up the remnants of its Empire, and the Commonwealth which

succeeded it, and throw its lot in with the European Union. Many English voters saw accession to the European Economic Community, signed by the Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath in 1973, as a betrayal of Empire and Commonwealth and still do today. Conservative MPs, have long regarded the EU as a threat to national identity, an affront to parliamentary sovereignty. And of course at the populist end, figures like Nigel Farage of the UK Independence Party portray Brussels almost as a foreign power that has conducted a bureaucratic invasion of the UK and converted it into a vassal state. They believe that Europe is intent on diluting and even extinguishing UK culture by the free movement of people – almost as if migrants from EU countries are an occupying force. Some hardened Europhobes even see the EU as a vehicle of German expansionism. They believe that Germany has achieved through the EU what it failed to do by force of arms: create a European superstate through which it exercises economic domination. And these are not just die-hard Tory backbenchers. Boris Johnson, now the British Foreign Secretary, said before the EU referendum in an interview with the Daily Telegraph that he thought the EU was following the “same objectives as Hitler, through different means”, by unifying Europe under “one authority”.

Leading Brexiteers like Liam Fox envisage Brexit as essentially a recreation of the old British Empire, a new anglophone trading entity to rival the European Union. When they talk of Global Britain, or as some in the Foreign Office styled it “British Empire 2.0” they are looking to

recreate a anglosphere which maps the old British Empire and the Commonwealth that succeeded it. Hence Boris Johnson hailing our new trading links with India, New Zealand, Canada as if these can challenge the Evil Empire of Brussels which they believe has kept Britain down for the last fifty years.

Now, it has to be said that former British colonies like India don't get the warm and fuzzies when they hear talk like this. Their recollection of the British Empire is not of some benevolent golden age of British civilisation but of imperial exploitation, racism and oppression. This is most vividly laid out books like “Inglorious Empire, what the British did for India” by Shushi Taroor. Seen from India's point of view, the Empire was a disaster: it destroyed their industry and trade, and turned what was an advanced county into a source of raw materials. Indians were taxed at rates of 50% to pay the for their own brutal subjugation by the British Raj. Indians have been decidedly cool about the Brexiters call for new trade relations, not least because they believe racial echoes of British Imperialism remain. Indians deeply resent having their visas checked or denied under Britain's new immigration controls. Indian staff and students Edinburgh University of which I was Rector, used to hold what they called a Namaste nights to welcome the many Indian students arriving in Edinburgh. Not any more. Since Brexit they have stopped coming because they feel they are simply not wanted, and they resent the invasive and humiliating tests they have to pass to get a visa.

Now I am not saying that Scots were immune to the

imperial mindset – just look at Jardine Mathieson! Many Scots subscribed to the myths of racial superiority of the white man. However Scotland's attitude to the British Empire, and the Empire's attitude to the Scots, was always somewhat ambivalent, or perhaps disingenuous. Scots may have been part and parcel of the British Empire, but they clearly weren't the top dogs. Scots were trusted servants who were in bed with the British Empire, literally in the case of Ghillie John Brown and Queen Victoria, but were clearly never regarded as equals. Scots may have fought imperial wars, but never fooled themselves into believing they were part of the master race that ruled India. It was hard to do so when you were so much obviously poorer and of diminished stature. That was one reason the Scots fought so hard – they had to distinguish themselves somehow and many did on the battlefield, where they were largely used as cannon fodder. “There is no great mischief if they fall” said General Wolfe before the battle of Quebec, confirming that Scots soldiers were expendable on the battlefield.

Scotland's investment in the romance of Empire, as in the books of Rudyard Kipling, was strictly limited because it was defined by the culture and mores of the English public school elite. Scots do not on the whole play cricket, the sport of Empire. When English people sang “Rule Britannia” or “There'll Always be an England”, at the last night of the Proms, Scots mumbled along, but were under no illusions that Scotland was really part of this imperial project. Glasgow was called the “Second City” of Empire, but it was clearly second class. It is true that Scots were

disproportionately represented in the colonial administration, in imperial trade and commerce and the military, but this was partly because these were very dangerous occupations. Not for nothing was Africa called the White Man's Grave. Imperial service meant surviving long sea journeys and exposure to tropical diseases and poor diet. European life expectancy in the early years of the British Raj in India was considered to be no longer than two monsoons. The English ruling classes were inclined to have their sons remain at home and count the receipts and leave the Empire to a hardier, and more expendable peoples.

So, to sum up. Scotland was a European nation before the Union. Scotland was a junior partner of Empire, but ordinary Scots saw little benefit, and they were not culturally or socially connected to the English racial elite. Consequently, when the British Empire finally died, most ordinary Scots did not cling quite so tenaciously to the myths of Empire (though the myths of the Scottish regiments remained potent among many working class communities). Scotland had always had a much more instrumental relationship with Empire. This perhaps partly explains why Scots did not feel so threatened by the British membership of the European Union when it finally happened in 1973. The EU has never really been a live issue in Scotland. Europe did not appear to ordinary Scottish voters as an existential threat; indeed it was in many ways, as I have suggested, a reconnection with the Nordic-oriented Scotland that existed before the Union with England.

Moreover, Scots did not see the institutions of the European Union as problematic, and were not fazed by the pooling of sovereignty that membership of the EU entailed. After all, Scots were already part of a union, the United Kingdom, in which they had pooled sovereignty. They didn't feel threatened by having many of their laws, especially over trade, made in a different jurisdiction, in Brussels. They were used to Scottish laws being made in another country, England. Scots moreover, did not subscribe in the same way as the English elites to the almost mystical doctrines of parliamentary sovereignty, the Dician notion that Westminster should not and could not bend her will to any other legislative authority. Scotland didn't have a parliament at all for three hundred years. And finally, since Scots are a migrant nation, and had been wandering over Europe and the rest of the world, for centuries, they have never been quite so anxious about immigration from Europe. They perhaps don't fear cultural miscegenation, or being swamped, because Scots culture was always overwhelmed by that of its larger neighbour.

The European Union, and Britain's future in it, always bottom of the lists of key election issues offered to opinion pollsters by Scottish voters. Most Scots couldn't understand what the fuss was all about back in the 1990s, when the English elites were riven with divisions over Europe, and the UK Conservative government split over the Maastricht Treaty. It's true that fishing communities in the North East of Scotland didn't like the Common Fisheries Policy very much, but there are very few fisherfolk left, now that fishing is conducted by industrial trawlers. And

others benefitted materially from the European Union structural funds. Around £500m a year is allocated to Scotland through the Common Agricultural Policy programmes. Scottish universities have always looked to Europe for inspirations since the days of the Scottish Enlightenment, and have been enthusiastic participants in EU initiatives like Horizon 2020 which helps finance research cooperation across Europe.

Younger Scots were mildly excited by the coming of free movement in Europe, though Scots have been emigrating for centuries anyway so what's new. Scots who remained at home did not fear immigration, in the way so many English communities did. On the contrary, the Scottish government welcomes migrants. Scotland has an ageing population – ageing much faster than England – partly because of longevity, but also because of outward migration. The Scottish economy needs young workers to contribute to GDP and pay taxes to pay for social care of the increasingly elderly population. Before the independence referendum, it was estimated that Scotland needs around 24,000 immigrants ever year just to stand still demographically.

As recently as 2004, before the enlargement of the European Union, there were fears that Scotland's population was in catastrophic decline, as population dwindled below 5 million. People feared that Scotland was becoming an empty glen, and industrial wasteland, a tartan theme park populated by old age pensioners and tourists on the whisky trail. But immigration from Europe especially from Poland has allowed Scotland's population to rebound. The latest

figures show it at 5.4 million, the highest population ever, and this has been almost entirely because of inward migration.

Europe has been very good for small nations, and it helped resolve Scotland's cultural and constitutional contradictions: being a nation in its own right while being part of Great Britain. Scotland could regard itself as a part of the UK, but also part of Europe. Being subject to the laws emerging from Brussels, in a sense diluted the sovereignty of Westminster. Scotland could also regard itself as part of Europe of the regions. Above all, Europe gave Scotland a sense that being small didn't mean being insignificant. There were models of advanced, dynamic economies like Finland and Denmark who have the highest quality of life in the world and retain an egalitarian ethos very similar to Scotlands.

And it's not just the Nordic countries. I have just come back from Slovakia and Slovenia, the little countries of central Europe that everyone forgets about. The Slovenian and Slovakian embassies meet every fortnight to exchange all the mail that has been wrongly directed. Slovakia, which left the Czech Republic in 1993 in the Velvet Divorce, is now, thanks to the EU, the largest per capita car maker in the world. Tiny Slovenia suffered appallingly in the 20th Century. It was occupied successively by Hungarians, the Italian fascists, the Nazis and then the Communists. Each invasion brought a new linguistic community as attempts were made to dismember and extinguish Slovenia's very existence. Even after the Second World War, the allied

powers gave almost its entire coast to Italy because they wanted to restrict Stalin's access to the Adriatic. When it became independent in 1991, having to fight its way out of the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia had few natural resources, no oil, no fishing industry, no tourism and very little industry. Yet, this is now a prosperous, liberal democracy secure in its identity with one of the best economic growth rates in Europe. It suffered set backs in the financial crisis, but Slovenia managed to resolve the sovereign debt problem without any bail out from the IMF or the European Central Bank.

So for a country like Scotland with its oil, whisky, tourism and fishing – independence in Europe began to look like a pretty attractive proposition. Indeed, there seemed to many to be little need, many believed, for formal separation from England. For the last forty years, as the memory of Empire faded, Scotland has been gradually disentangling itself from the United Kingdom. The Scottish parliament was restored in 1999, and the country has been gradually reacquiring economic functions including personal taxation.

Of course, there were many in the Scottish National Party who argued that Scotland could only flourish in this new European environment if it were fully autonomous from the UK. The SNP's attitude to Europe is positive and summed up by its slogan: Independence in Europe. But until recently, that was very much a minority view. Most Scottish voters believed that Scotland would naturally evolve into a form of federalism, or con federalism, which

would allow it to remain within the UK while gravitating towards the European Union. This gradualist proposition came unstuck finally on 27th June 2016 when Scotland woke up to discover that, far from ascending gracefully into the ranks of European small nations, it was being ripped out of Europe altogether by Brexit. This was a shock that no one had prepared for. Like most commentators, Scots believed the opinion polls that suggested the UK would vote to remain in the EU. They were wrong. Except in Scotland where voters opted to Remain in the EU by a margin of 2 to 1.

The Scottish government's initial reaction to the Brexit shock was to claim that the Scottish Independence Referendum of 2014 was effectively null and void. That it had been conducted on a false prospectus, because the Unionist campaign was largely premised on the claim, as explained earlier, that only by remaining in the United Kingdom could Scotland remain in the European Union. Of course, the counter argument to this is that when Scots were voting in 2014, they were expressing their preference for remaining in the UK by 55% to 45%. There is no immediate read across to Europe because the EU was only one issue in the campaign. Many Scots clearly would still wish to remain in the UK even if it is out of the EU. No one really knows. However, the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, argued that Scots should have an opportunity to revisit the independence question before the decision to leave the EU became irrevocable. Consequently she argued for indyref2 as it was called to be held before March 2019, when the UK formally leaves the EU.

This of course left out the question of what precise relationship Scotland ought to have to the EU were it to become independent. If we regard Scotland as essentially a Nordic nation in terms of its history, culture, economy and climate, where would an independent Scotland's best interests lie? There is no easy answer to this. Should Scotland go for full EU membership, like Finland, which is a full member of the eurozone. Or should it emulate Norway and Iceland, which remained aloof from the European Union, and instead has membership of the single market via the European Economic Area. Or perhaps something in-between like Denmark and Sweden, which are in the European Union, but have opt outs from the European Single Currency.

There are advantages to the Norwegian model, obviously, since it means that Scotland would not have to be a member of the Common Agricultural Policy or the Common Fisheries Policy, so it keeps its fish stocks. It would also be in the tariff-free European single market and complete with free movement. On the other hand, this half-way house involves paying the fees to be a member of the European club without having any say on the decision-making processes. EEA countries are not represented on the European Council in the European Parliament or the European Commission, hence the claim that Norway was subject to “fax democracy”. It used to be said that Norway waited for its legislation to be sent by fax, though nowadays it's Facebook, or perhaps Twitter Democracy as Norwegians learn about EU legislation first through social media.

Through the winter of 2016 and 17 a lively debate began in Scotland about whether and independent Scotland would be better off in the EU, the Customs Union or the EEA. However, this debate was rather abruptly terminated by the surprise general election of June 2017, in which the SNP lost a third of its seats. This killed off any prospect of an early repeat referendum on independence. The First Minister Nicola Sturgeon had declared her intention of seeking indyref2 in March and won a vote in the Scottish parliament for a so-called Section 30 order to trigger a repeat referendum. The Scottish parliament does not have the power to call a legally binding referendum on its own account, and has to ask Westminster for permission. It has always assumed that if the Scottish parliament were to vote in such a way, that the UK government would have to recognise it and permit such a ballot. But the Prime Minister, Theresa May, calculated correctly that Scottish voters, already bewildered by Brexit, were in no mind to have another referendum put before them. Instead she called a snap election, in June 2017, believing that she couldn't lose. Unfortunately for her, she miscalculated and lost her majority in parliament.

But this election also undermined the Scottish National Party, which lost a third of its seats, including its Westminster leader, Angus Robertson, and the former leader, Alex Salmond. The SNP is still by far the largest party in Holyrood, but this was a huge blow to its confidence and to the prospects for Scottish independence. In late June, Nicola Sturgeon announced that she was shelving the

referendum indefinitely. This was met with dismay by her coalition partners the Scottish Green Party, who had helped deliver the Holyrood vote for Section 30. But Ms Sturgeon said that she had consulted large numbers of Scottish voters and been convinced that they did not want an early referendum on independence.

History may judge it regrettable that she didn't speak to them earlier, because the climb-down over the repeat referendum has had serious consequences for Scotland, and not just to the prospects for independence, which must now be considered remote. The affair has greatly diminished the Scottish government's bargaining power in the Brexit process. Before June, the threat of another referendum, and the possibility of the break up of Britain, was taken very seriously by the UK government and UK commentators. Now the threat has gone and the Brexit ministers are likely to press ahead with EU Withdrawal without paying too much heed to Scottish anxieties. The UK will survey the 19,000 odd pieces of legislation repatriated from Brussels and will decide what to do with them. Theresa May has even said that there can be no presumption that the First Minister of Scotland has a right to hold meetings with the Prime Minister of the UK.

It really is a serious matter not just for supporters of the Scottish National Party, because the way in which Brexit is now being conducted is likely to curtail the powers of the devolved Scottish parliament itself. Before the general election, UK ministers were promising that the Scottish parliament would lose no powers as a result of Brexit and

would indeed gain many more powers, possibly over environmental legislation and employment rights. They're still saying that. But the Great Repeal Bill has made clear that powers over matters like agriculture and fisheries, repatriated from Brussels, will go directly to Westminster, and it will be for the UK prime minister alone to decide which subsequently devolve back to Holyrood. The EU withdrawal bill gives the UK prime minister powers to do this through executive authority, without consulting parliament, under so called Henry VIII Clause. There are fears, not just in Scotland, that this could fundamentally alter the constitutional standing of the devolved parliaments. The Welsh First Minister Carwyn Jones - a Labour Party politician - has called the Great Repeal Bill a “naked power grab” by London, which will severely diminish the authority of the parliaments in Cardiff, Edinburgh and Northern Ireland..

So, where does Scotland go from here? Well, independence in Europe seems off the table for the foreseeable future. Scotland will now leave the European Union, like it or not, in March 2019. At present, because of the weakness of the Scottish National Party, it seems unlikely that the UK government will give any concessions to the Scottish government in the Brexit process. It has become very much a bystander to the process. It may now be many years or decades before the question of independence is raised once more in Scotland, and by then Scotland may be so much more closely integrated into the United Kingdom that separation may seem inconceivable

So the future does not look bright for Scottish pro-Europeans. Scotland had been gravitating to Europe in the past decade, and had seen Brussels as a guarantor of the relative autonomy of the Scottish parliament. That constitutional autonomy seems likely to be curtailed in future by the process of repatriation of powers from Brussels which will greatly strengthen the centre. Scotland's may still look to those nordic countries for inspiration, but it seems now fated to become once again a region of Great Britain – the new Brexit Britain, an introverted and centralist state, as many see it, in which xenophobic and anti-immigration attitudes appear likely to flourish. It has been an unfortunate sequence of events which has led to this, the most significant of which is probably Nicola Sturgeon's ill-fated and premature attempt to call a referendum before Scottish voters were ready for one. It is a mistake that may have killed nationalism in the UK, in the same way that the second Quebec referendum killed off the prospects for independence there.

So, I would have to say in conclusion that to answer the question is Scotland British or European, Scotland is for the time being British and not European. And I don't think that's going to change. Recent Scottish history confirms that in politics, as in life, timing really is everything.

Discussion: British government confusion over Brexit. Is the UK really leaving the EU, or is it already trying to get back in? Customs Union, Irish Border, Free Movement, European Court of Justice. The British establishment is in

turmoil as it collides with the reality of international relations and trading partnerships.

The Scottish Government's White Paper "Scotland's Future in Europe" in December 2016 examined various options for a "differentiated relationship" with the EU. The EU has allowed scope for "remote" areas to have anomalous relations with the EU. The Reverse Greenland option: out of the EU but still part of Denmark which is in it. The Channel Islands in the Customs Union and under UK law, but not in the European Union. Gibraltar, Aland Islands, Faroes.. The UK government rejected them out of court insisting that the UK had to leave the EU "as one country" with no loose ends.

The Scotland Act of 1998 allowed for incremental federalism, an accretion of powers for Holyrood, which is a parliament exercising primary law-making powers. Under Schedule 5, only the powers reserved to Westminster were specified, not those devolved to Scottish Parliament. This meant that whenever Schedule 5 was silent, it was assumed that the Scottish Parliament had jurisdiction. This means that as a matter of law, powers repatriated from Brussels after Brexit, like agriculture, fisheries, environment, should go directly to Holyrood and not to Westminster. The Prime Minister Theresa May has rejected this interpretation. Only those powers deemed to be Scottish by the Great Repeal Bill process will be devolved. This reverses the constitutional status of the Scottish Parliament.

