



Scotland Votes For Second Independence Referendum As UK Triggers Brexit

World News by [Krista Johnson](#) - March 28, 2017 0



On the same day that British Prime Minister Theresa May signed the letter to formally begin the United Kingdom's European Union exit, otherwise known as Brexit, the Scottish Parliament voted to seek a second independence referendum.

First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon received the backing of the Scottish Green Party, pushing the Tuesday vote over the passage threshold with a final tally of 69 to 59. The vote gives the government the go-ahead to hold a vote between fall 2018 and spring 2019, but not everyone is on board, including a vital piece of the puzzle: the British government.

On Monday, Theresa May met with Sturgeon as part of her rounds to discuss the impending Brexit with Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The bilateral talks did not go well, as May made it clear that she sees a Scottish referendum as a distraction that could hurt Britain's negotiations with the EU. Sturgeon did not back down and held the scheduled independence vote in parliament on Tuesday.

Tensions between the two leaders follow weeks of back and forth, where Sturgeon even challenged May to a debate over the issue, and with the approval of a second referendum by the Scots, it doesn't appear Sturgeon will stand down anytime soon.

However, Sturgeon does not get the final say in the vote. Both Houses of Parliament in the United Kingdom would have to approve the measure, so May could easily block the move until the UK finalizes leaving the EU, which could take until the end of 2019 or longer.

A UK spokesperson reiterated to the Independent on Tuesday that the UK would not entertain the second referendum during Brexit.

"At this point, all our focus should be on our negotiations with the European Union, making sure we get the right deal for the whole of the UK. It would be unfair to the people of Scotland to ask them to make a crucial decision without the necessary information about our future relationship with Europe, or what an independent Scotland would look like," said the spokesperson. "We have been joined together as one country for more than 300 years. We've



worked together, we've prospered together, we've fought wars together, and we have a bright future. At this crucial time we should be working together, not pulling apart."

Kezia Dugdale, the Scottish Labour party leader, agreed with the statement.

"There absolutely should not be another independence referendum until after Brexit," she stated. "We have no idea what Brexit looks like, or how it will impact our economy and families in Scotland. If there is to be another vote, the people of Scotland deserve clarity on what they are being asked to vote on."

Dugdale has data on her side, at least for now. Despite 62 percent of Scotland voting to stay in the EU last June, recent polls show that Scottish independence does not have the votes. The Telegraph reports that 56 percent of Scots would vote no if a second referendum were held today.

Objections aren't found solely in Scotland and the United Kingdom. The Scottish First Minister has stated in the past that Scotland plans to join the European Union upon leaving the United Kingdom, but other nations are not supportive of the idea because it involves breaking up the United Kingdom.

"Spain supports the integrity of the United Kingdom and does not encourage secessions or divisions in any of the member states," said Alfonso Dastis, Spain's foreign minister, adding that Scotland "would have to queue, meet the requirements for entry, hold negotiations and the result would be that these negotiations would take place."

The same cannot be said of a Scotland's neighbor Northern Ireland. According to a letter from Brexit Secretary David Davis, the split between British-aligned Northern Ireland and the independent Republic of Ireland could benefit the north if both countries agreed to reunify.



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Instead of going through the same process as Scotland, Northern Ireland can invoke the Good Friday Agreement, which is a mechanism set in place by the British government to allow the two halves of Ireland to unify. This would allow the country to become a part of an EU member state, the Republic of Ireland, and skip the process required of Scotland.

Northern Ireland still faces Brexit obstacles beyond a vote, however. The country is in the midst of a constitutional crisis, so it's not clear whether this option is up for serious consideration.

Without an Irish-style emergency parachute, Scotland's road is tough, but not everything is doom-and-gloom for independence supporters, as more people with public influence are speaking in favor of independence.

Molly Scott Cato, Member of the European Parliament for the United Kingdom, expressed support for Scottish independence earlier this month.

"How can we protect Scotland against what is, essentially, an English delusion?," asked Scott Cato during the Scottish Green Party conference. "I think we know the answer to that: by ensuring that Scotland does not get dragged into another destructive English adventure. And that means by ensuring that by the end of the Brexit process Scotland is an independent member of the European Union. I wish you good luck on that journey and will do all I can to support you!"

Support from politicians such as Scott Cato are welcomed by Sturgeon and other supporters independence, but not all of those with large public reach are so well-received.

Jim Dowson, the far-right millionaire the owner of "Patriotic News Agency," expressed his support this month. Dowson is a controversial figure who previously backed the British National Party (BNP), a far-right UK political party which split from the National Front in 1982, and was a member of Britain First, a movement created by former members of the BNP to stand against multiculturalism and Islamism and to protect Christian morality.

During the 2016 US election, Dowson used his social media reach to spread viral pro-Trump, anti-Clinton memes and conspiracies across the Internet. Now he plans to use his strong social media arm to promote independence if and when a vote occurs.

"This is a global network that I believed helped elect Donald Trump and backed Brexit to win," Dowson said, according to the Guardian. "The SNP [Scottish National Party] will hate it that I am involved, but I am not interested in what the SNP say. I think that if people are on these sites and realise that someone like me has changed my mind, then pro-union voters in Scotland might change their minds too."

It's not clear if Dowson will get to flex his Internet might anytime soon, but the odds are not good.

Theresa May's official notice to the EU will be delivered to European Council President Donald Tusk at 12:30 on Wednesday, triggering Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty and beginning Brexit. Based on May's clear stance, any path to Scottish independence will now have to wait for the United Kingdom's full exit from the European Union, which is expected to take two years, but could take longer, if needed, with a European Council agreement.

The only thing to do now is to wait and see if the independence movement continues to simmer during that time, or if it finally boils over as UK negotiations with the European Union hit the spotlight.

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