

# U.K. Breakup? New Poll Sets the Scene for Scottish Independence Referendum

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*Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has hailed as 'phenomenal' a new poll which shows majority support for Scottish Independence. The survey, which was carried out by Lord Ashcroft in the wake of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's visit to Scotland a week ago, puts those in favour of independence at 46% with 43% against. If one removes undecided and non-voters, it indicates 52% for and 48% against Scotland being an independent country.*

This poll has come at a pivotal moment in British politics, when the future of the country in relation to the European Union is hanging in the balance. And credit can only be given to Nicola Sturgeon for facing off her critics (many Nationalists among them) who impatiently derided her for not calling a second independence referendum earlier.

Sturgeon, who insisted she would only call 'indyref2' – as it has become known – 'once the terms of Brexit are known' has stuck to her guns and like the seasoned politician she is, has patiently awaited for momentum to be at its highest behind the independence movement. As any experienced politician knows, in this game, timing is everything.

Now, with the promotion of Boris Johnson to Prime Minister, Nationalists would argue that the recipe for independence is complete. The set of circumstances created by the antics of a chaotic Westminster government – years of botched Brexit deals, in-fighting and poor leadership, together with an attitude that Scotland's interests are of no significance whatsoever to the Brexit 'war party', have only exacerbated what was already a problematic situation. For with a majority of Scots voting to Remain within the EU in the 2016 Brexit referendum – in contrast to their neighbours south of the border – the ground was already prepared for conflict ahead.

But instead of handling Scotland with respect and giving it the due attention required, Scots were given a clear signal that their differing stance on Brexit was of no consequence. This position was only enhanced by Boris Johnson's visit north last week where he failed even to interact with ordinary Scots and limited his one-day appearance to well-managed trips to the naval base at Faslane and the First Minister's residence, Bute House. His announcement of giving £300 million to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, has been received more as an insult than anything else; an attempt to 'buy off' Scotland, which is far from welcome.

There is no doubt as well that both Johnson himself, and the elitist culture he represents, being the product of a private school, privileged background, does not go down well with the average working Scot. But put that together with his determination to force Brexit through come hell or high water, and you have Scots digging their heels in even further.

Nicola Sturgeon, in contrast to this reckless, haphazard blonde buffoon, is seen as the

embodiment of common sense and rationality. In such circumstances it's no surprise therefore that one could expect something of a swing from voters who haven't supported independence in the past - at least they'd have a leader they weren't embarrassed of.

Sturgeon is now expected to call a second referendum at the earliest opportunity. However, Professor John Curtice, Britain's most famous pollster, writing in *The Times* on Tuesday nevertheless reminds us to exercise caution when reading such survey results. He writes:

"Individual polls that report an apparently significant change should always be treated with caution. Polls figures can go up and down purely by chance, even when no-one has changed their mind".

Furthermore he says there would have to be many more surveys carried out before we could really gauge public opinion on independence.

But time is of the essence. In less than three months the UK could find itself crashing out of the European Union with no deal, and all the economic and political uncertainty that comes with it. Speaking on this earlier, Nicola Sturgeon commented:

'There is a growing sense of urgency that if we don't want to get dragged down a political path that we don't want to go down...then we need to consider becoming independent sooner rather than later'.

All signs indicate that such a referendum is now imminent. But of course it still needs Westminster approval. Sturgeon has already ruled out a Catalonia scenario whereby an illegal referendum was called and independence announced on the basis of its result.

She seems determined to do things by the book; which, if taking into account Spain's and the EU reaction to Catalonian independence, is the sensible option. Therefore it could be very much down to just how obstinate the Johnson government will be in relation to granting indyref2, and the extent to which they truly value the Union. Based on recent events, this remains to be seen...

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