

Scotland votes No to secession from the UK but its nationalist fervor remains

✘ The Scottish independence referendum has resulted in a solid win for the No vote (No to independence). The strength of support for the union with the rest of Great Britain was above expectations and has left the United Kingdom more 'united', marked by a polite and 'fair play' exchange between British Prime Minister David Cameron and the nationalist Scottish Prime Minister Alex Salmond sent the British Pound and the European stock markets soaring, greeting the result with a sigh of relief. The US Dollar has also responded favorably.

"It's all over" said Prime Minister David Cameron while nationalist leader Alex Salmond replied 'not quite'. The Union Jack loyalists won the day with a rather solid 55% majority over the secessionists amid a strong voter turnout. However, the results are close enough to leave open the issue of Scottish fate in the long term. The unionist front was strongest in the capital, Edinburgh, while the secessionists saw their strongest showing in the largest city, Glasgow. The confidence in independence there was overcome by what appears to have been a sense of uncertainty over the 'march' toward a new State. The nation remains split substantially in half and the polls suggest that the issue will re-emerge. London has been quick to realize this and promptly offered a series of offers aimed at ensuring greater autonomy for Scotland and for all the other nations forming the United Kingdom, including England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This will be one of David Cameron's tests; he will have to honor his commitments. In the past it was not so. Tory Governments have often disregarded promises the commitments, reflected in the fact that Tory MP's have all but disappeared from Scotland; there is only one out

of a group of 59.

In order for the Tories gain credibility and close the wounds that have been widened by these past months of conflict it is necessary to act quickly and with clarity. The leaders of the UK's three main parties represented at the Parliament in Westminster have already agreed on roadmap to strengthen the Kingdom even if there are no actual programs yet. The Scottish drive for autonomy remains alive; after all, the parliament is dominated by secessionists. That means Cameron will have to confront demands from Edinburgh, reaching compromises over taxation, health care, transportation and many other issues related to the autonomy trend. Cameron, will then have to manage what will surely be similar claims from the other nations, harmonizing these with the needs of the United Kingdom as a whole. Cameron has promised to do this in a few months. Should he actually achieve this, then the British Parliament – arguably the first democratic one in the world – will offer the world another lesson in democracy and efficiency.

This is easier decreed than done. For all of the Prime Minister's goodwill and the unanimous support from the opposition parties, Parliament still has to find out where it will draw the resources to address the Scots' grievances while appeasing the anxieties of the Welsh, Northern Irish, and English folks, who will be eager to demand the same kinds of benefits – which will surely imply resource transfers – that will be bestowed upon Scotland. Yet, there is one more important challenge left. Despite its nationalist spirit, the Scottish separatists (who were defeated also due to the predictable fears over an uncertain future and the massive pro-UK campaign funded by London) were driven by a greater sense of belonging within the European Union. Scotland is Euro-optimist while the UK, especially under the current government, is Euro-skeptic. Prime Minister Cameron has announced a referendum over the UK's membership in the EU.

Scotland's 'Yes' side would have immediately applied for membership within the EU had the vote gone its way on Thursday. The Scots like their links to the EU as almost half of its trade is with Union members. Nonetheless, other EU members themselves will have to deal with nationalist re-awakenings resulting from the Scottish secessionist movement. Spain has witnessed a revival of the Catalonian separatists and Italy's Northern League has been watching Scotland's results closely. The referendum has come and gone, closing an acute crisis, but the chronic malaise of nations that threaten to be incompatible with each other, remains.