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Scotland's sui generis

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How should Serbia look at the Scottish case for independence – which suddenly appears to be capable of becoming as “sui generis” as Kosovo?

Dušan Spasojević argues that there is at least one thing Serbia should not do – relish with malignant spite for England's vows, reminiscing London's support for the independence of Kosovo.



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After the 18th September nothing will ever be the same. What makes the Scottish referendum for independence special and unique is the fact that on Thursday, four million Scots with the right to vote will decide on the future of an over three-century-long political union with England. Their votes can indeed shake the international relations from the Atlantic all the way to Vladivostok. In the case of a victory of the unionists, the internal nature and character of Great Britain would nevertheless be completely changed. If, on the other hand, Scotland chooses independence – a country of the UN's Security Council, which has played a crucial role in many historical events in the past 300 years, would be wiped off the World Map.

'Of all the small nations of this earth, perhaps only the ancient Greeks surpass the Scots in their contribution to mankind'. This way, with chosen words, the great statesman Winston Churchill spoke of his fellow countrymen of the North. His heir, the current PM David Cameron, himself of Scottish origin, perhaps thinks just the same, but has nevertheless remained at the margins of the campaign, which is in these days coming to an end.

London's Conservative-LibDem coalition hasn't managed to pull off the difficult role of the last hope's gambler. To be fair, the current government inherited the problem of Scottish independentism from their predecessors, Blair's Labour party, who rekindled the tepid flame of the SNP's secessionist ambitions when they gave back to Scotland its Parliament, which had been abolished back in 1707.

Instead of acknowledging in time that the problem was real, Cameron and friends decided to ignore what was happening on the other side of Hadrian's wall up until early September, when the Sunday Times published a poll showing a 51% preference for the Yes vote. The only English politician who decided to look straight into the eyes of the problem and call it the right name was the charismatic mayor of London. Boris Johnson called his colleague to stop deceiving the British public by giving the impression that, in case Scotland votes for independence, everything will more or less remain the same.

How should Serbia look at the Scottish 'sui generis' case (*as Kosovo was defined, TN*) and which lessons should it draw by waiting for the referendum's results? We need to reflect upon it calmly and soberly, and act practically. This is not the moment in which we shall – carried away by low emotions, because London's foreign policy has unsparingly supported each separatist movement against our own interests for the past 25 years – give them tit for tat with an evil smile.

A good example of sensible reasoning and decisive acting in the Scottish crisis is a recent [article](#) in the Times by Serbian former Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic. Foreign politics is a matter of the reason, not of the heart.

The Scottish case raises the question whether is it at all possible, in today's Europe, to stop an ethnic or administrative political entity to follow the same path. If half of the Scottish people want to leave a relatively stable political union, in which it has reached the highest possible level of autonomy and has been continuously highlighting its own identity, how can we justify the survival of certain political projects which keep not bringing to any results? On the other hand, the example of Scotland stands as a warning that a great deal of attention must be paid to each, even the tiniest, alarm bell signalling separatism which should, if opposite to our vital interests, be eradicated at the beginning.

This case needs to be considered also under the perspective of the international standing of Serbia in Europe. Who, and in which way, will fill in Great Britain's role in advocating for certain values and principles? It is worth remembering that the UK, at least until Thursday comes, is currently on of the few advocates of a concept of a Europe made of sovereign national countries. In the brutal world of international relations, a concept such as physics' vacuum does not exist – a space, left vacant, will not necessarily be filled in by another force and influence. For Serbia, as a candidate state for EU membership, it is important to determine which European dynamics will be strengthening and which will be fading away and which countries, next to Germany, will be their champions.

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Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of LSEE Research on SEE, nor of the London School of Economics.

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