

Scottish independence debate is far from over

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I am bemused by the widespread feeling, at least south of the border, that the general election has knocked discussion on Scottish independence into the long grass for all time to come. I am quite sure that this is not true.

Has anyone noticed, for example, that the new Scottish Tory MPs are acting as a quasi-independent group? There is not going to be an assimilation into the pack for them.

I suspect this might also be true, to a lesser degree, for Labour. And even, dare I say it, the four LibDems from Scotland.

Something has changed irrevocably. The fact is that the separate identity of Scotland and Scottish political interests is now clear. And Ruth Davidson, the supposed chief exponent of the Union, is if anything in reality the chief exponent of that distinct difference.

This matters, and nor should it be ignored. EVEL (English votes for English laws) makes it a real part of the UK parliamentary DNA now. More than that though, this division is real.

The Scottish general election was very obviously different to that in the rest of the UK. And it's only possible to pretend that a place with a different culture, economy and political ethos is subordinate to its neighbour for so long. Then the differences become intolerable to both (as Northern Ireland is at risk of finding as a result of a DUP alliance).

Far from independence being off the agenda in Scotland that country has re-discovered a healthy pluralism that is essential for its well-being. But all of it is grounded in Scottish identity. I don't see independence soon. But I definitely think it will happen. In fact, I can't really see how it could be otherwise.