

Some parts of the UK are clearly showing signs that the...

Published: January 13, 2026, 11:57 am

The English election result dominates the news agenda, at least in that country this morning. But before considering it in more detail there are two sets of results to note.

The first is in Scotland. The SNP did not get the 55 seats the exit poll predicted, but that always seemed optimistic. But it has got 48. That is a massive Scottish majority. There are three thoughts that follow on this.

The first is that Nicola Sturgeon is bound to call for an independence referendum.

The second is that Scotland did vote Remain.

The third is that for these two reasons, and because for some time to come the SNP might well provide the most united opposition Johnson faces in parliament, I think he might concede to the demand for that referendum. As an English populist he knows his electoral base will be happy to see Scotland go. And he will believe it will shore up his power for it to be gone. I am not saying there will not be a fight. But Johnson is a pragmatist without red lines. I expect him to concede.

The second fascinating result was in Northern Ireland. It was a bad night, overall, for Sinn Fein with its vote down heavily. It was a worse night for the DUP, who paid a high price for supporting the Tories and then not delivering. It was a good night for the democratic process with gains for the SDLP and Alliance Party. The clear indication that Northern Ireland is normalising its politics is very welcome even if the process has some way to go.

What both votes imply is that the Union can no longer be taken for granted. Indeed, its days look numbered. Amid signs that some parts of the UK very clearly see benefits to continuing EU membership (which does support the thesis that this was a Brexit dominated election) some parts of it are clearly showing signs that their union with Brussels is more important than their union with London. And who can blame them?