

The new

*For we ha'e faith in Scotland's hidden poo'ers,
The present's theirs, but a' the past and future's oors*

Hugh MacDiarmid, "Gairmscoile"

THERE ARE probably more than a few contenders for the 2020 *Phrase of the Year*, if such a competition were to exist. "You couldn't make it up", would certainly be high on the list, particularly in the context of the UK Government's performance in relation to Brexit, Covid-19 and, well pretty much everything really. But I think the winner would come from some variation of, "I just want things to get back to normal". After the six months or so we've just gone through surely there can't be anyone who wouldn't crave a return to normality, but the obvious follow up question is something like, "What is normal?"

Look back to 2019, before any news of impending global pandemic began to make itself known, and what was 'normal'? Well, in Scotland, we were still EU citizens for a start and continued to have hopes of the UK Government either reversing the decision to leave or, at the very least, coming to an agreement that wouldn't result in complete economic and social disaster. And our SNP representatives in Westminster still had the power to at least try to meaningfully influence the May/Johnson government towards something sensible by collaborating with like minds in the UK parties, some of them even Tories! Many of us probably believed in the prospect of, to some extent, being able to use that influence to help secure a second independence referendum in either spring or autumn of 2019.

And, there were plenty of other bad things contained within that normality. Austerity, climate change, the ever-increasing gap between 'the 1%' and the rest of us... the list could go on and on. But, away from politics, there were all the positives of the natural cycle

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of our lives. We would've been looking forward to get-togethers at Christmas, Hogmanay, Burns Night and many other celebrations with family and friends, and planning trips and holidays either to escape the winter gloom or to celebrate the arrival of summer. All of this, and much more, was our 'normal'. And then...

What happened next is only all too fresh in our minds, and we're still living through it. The last six months or so have passed in a blur of unprecedented civil and social restrictions, necessary to preserve lives, played out against the backdrop of an increasingly authoritarian yet increasingly incompetent UK Government. Thankfully, our own Scottish Government has been able to mitigate the worst of this, despite the lack of cooperation of either their UK counterparts or the UK-owned media outlets. Nicola Sturgeon has been hailed worldwide as one of the most impressive, compassionate and competent leaders, along with the likes of Jacinda Ardern and Angela Merkel, and Scotland has finally arrived fully on the world stage as a distinctive member of the family of nations. This is important as we head into the 'new normal'.

As individuals, the 'new normal' is unlikely to include many social gatherings until the arrival of proven, safe and reliable Covid-19 vaccines and treatments. We can feel sad about that, but we really have no choice. Unless, of course, we're pally with the posh boys who can get the legislation amended at the drop of a (top) hat in order to shoot a few wee beasties or drive 600 miles to check that our eyesight is working properly! To any normal, rational, sensible person it seems blindingly obvious that the quickest way through the pandemic is to try and minimise the incidence of the virus until these treatments arrive – for the scientific basis of that view look at anything written by Devi Sridhar, Professor of Public Health at the University of Edinburgh. Countries like New Zealand and Iceland, as examples, have done just that and look not only at their statistics but on their return to 'normality'. Small, independent countries with control of their own borders...

In any consideration of 'normal' in the Scottish context it doesn't take too long to arrive at independence as the key factor. Shackled to an incompetent and uncaring UK Government, our 'new normal' can only be the same, or worse, than the 'old normal'. Why? Because our political situation is not normal in any sense of the word. Normal, in the sense of a parliamentary

normal?

by Gordon
Craigie



democracy, is when the people get the government they vote for. Scotland has voted only once for a UK Tory government since 1945, yet we've been dictated to by Heath, Thatcher, Major, Cameron, May, and now this clown Johnson, despite none of them having a mandate in our country. The UK Government, particularly this one, somehow doesn't see Scotland as a country... sigh! It appears to be very confusing, for privileged English people in particular, and hard to understand the different terms associated with this little corner of the world so, listen up Etonians, House-Jocks and those at the back, here's a wee lesson:

- Great Britain is a geographical description of the largest of the British Isles, and consists of three

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countries: England, Scotland and Wales

- The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, commonly referred to as the UK, is a sovereign state brought about by the voluntary union of its four constituent parts: the countries of England, Scotland and Wales and the 'province' of Northern Ireland. (An alternative description of that 'province' is the 'occupied six counties', but the UK Establishment don't like that one!)

Independence is Normal

Algeria	الجزائر	AFN	Antigua & Barbuda	Independence is Normal	AGS	Aruba	Independence is Normal	ALS
The Bahamas	Independence is Normal	BS	Bahrain	البحرين	BD	Bahrain	Independence is Normal	DBB
Bahia	Independence is Normal	BVS	Botswana	Independence is Normal	BWP	Botswana	Independence is Normal	BS
Cameroun	Independence est normale	FCFA	Canada	Independence is Normal	CAD	Cyprus	It indipendenza est normale	CYX
Dominica	Independence is Normal	DD	Egypt	جمهورية مصر العربية	EGP	Eswatini	Independence is Normal	E
Fig	Independence is Normal	FJD	The Gambia	Independence is Normal	GMD	Ghana	Independence is Normal	GHC
Guatemala	Independence is Normal	GTQ	Guyana	Independence is Normal	GYD	India	independencia est normale	INR
Italy	independencia est normale	EUR	Israel	מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל	ILS	Jamaica	Independence is Normal	JM
Jordan	independencia est normale	JOD	Kazakhstan	Қазақстан Республикасы	KZT	Kiribati	Independence is Normal	KID
Kuwait	independencia est normale	KWD	Lesotho	Lesotho la rona e Sotho	LSM	Libya	independencia est normale	LYD
Malawi	Independence is Normal	MWK	Malaysia	independencia est normale	MYR	Maldives	Independence is Normal	MDF
Mali	Independence est normale	MLF	Mauritius	Independence is Normal	MUR	Myanmar	independencia est normale	MMK
Nauru	Independence is Normal	AUD	New Zealand	Independence is Normal	NZD	Nigeria	Independence is Normal	NGN
Oman	independencia est normale	OMR	Pakistan	پاکستان	PKR	Oman	independencia est normale	OMR
Saint Lucia	Independence is Normal	ECX	Saint Kitts & Nevis	Independence is Normal	ECN	St Vincent & Grenadines	Independence is Normal	VCX
Seychelles	Independence est normale	SCR	Sierra Leone	Independence is Normal	LEL	Sintomas Islands	Independence is Normal	SBH
South Africa	independencia est normale	ZAR	Si Somaliland	Madaxdhaqanka ee Somaliland	SOM	Sri Lanka	independencia est normale	LKR
Sudan	independencia est normale	SUD	Tanzania	Uhuru ni wa kawaida	TZS	Togo	Independence is Normal	TGS
Tanzania & Togo	Independence is Normal	TZS	Tunisia	Independence is Normal	TUN	Uganda	Uhuru ni wa kawaida	UGX
United Arab Emirates	independencia est normale	AED	United States	Independence is Normal	USD	Vanuatu	Independence est normale	VTV

There are 195 independent sovereign countries in the World.
63 countries (32 percent) chose independence over London Rule
None of these 63 countries required a Section 30 agreement
None of these 63 countries use sterling as their main currency



Alister 'Union' Jack, the Secretary of State AGAINST Scotland!
 ©Chris McAndrew
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Colonial Quay, Glasgow – home of the UK State Broadcaster!

- In 1707, the country of Scotland entered into a voluntary political agreement with the country of England – I'm being generous with the 'voluntary' and 'agreement' parts here! – which resulted in the Kingdom of Great Britain
- The first incarnation of the UK would not arrive until 1801 when agreement was reached with Ireland to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland
- After Ireland regained its independence in 1922, the present UK was formed as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Hopefully we can simplify things a bit for these expensively under-educated buffoons by regaining our independence next year and, if we are rapidly followed by an independent Wales and a reunited Ireland then... everybody wins!

'Normal', is when your democratically elected government carry out the mandate given to them by the electorate. In our current situation, under devolution, our Scottish Government is constrained because

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it doesn't have full control of the economic levers that 'normal' countries do. We can't implement all of the policies we want to see in health, education, welfare, social care, green energy or any of the other areas that 'normal' countries can fund out of income or borrowing because we need our colonial masters in Westminster to 'approve' first. But they've dug themselves a hole... For years they've been telling Scots we're too wee, too poor, too stupid and that they are generously funding us at a far higher level than in England. The trouble is, many of their English electorate believe that, aided and abetted by media claims of English taxes subsidising Scottish spending on free prescriptions and higher education and all the other things that Scotland couldn't possibly afford because... deficit... black hole... What utter keich! Do they really believe that a Tory government (to be fair, it wouldn't matter if it was the other lot either!) is so concerned about the welfare of those poor, unfortunate Scots, who don't vote for them, that they are willing to subsidise us out of the goodness of their hearts? Really? If Scotland was genuinely a drain on the UK and if England was genuinely subsidising Scotland, then the ruling elite would've cast us adrift lang syne. No, those in government know the truth as well as we do – Scotland subsidises England and has done since 1707 – but they've been so busy spinning their lies that there's growing resentment on both sides of the border. Oh, nearly forgot, "there is no border" (@Alister 'Union' Jack, @de Pfeffel, @Fluffy Mundell, et al). You really couldn't make this stuff up!

'Normal', is when you have newspapers, TV and radio channels, and other media owned, controlled and produced in your own country. Other countries must laugh at Scotland over this – who else has their entertainment, news and analysis decided on by people in another country? But how have we arrived at this situation anyway, where the bulk of our broadcast and print media is controlled and distributed by another country? Let's have a look at a random selection of similarly sized European countries and see how many TV channels they have: Catalunya, population 7.5 million, 10 channels; Denmark, population 6 million, 24 channels; Finland, population 5.5 million, 20 channels; Norway, population 5.5 million, 28 channels. Now, obviously, each of these countries will also be able to access channels



More than sixty countries have won their independence from the UK. Not one has ever asked to give it up again. Not one.



from neighbouring countries – and, in the case of Catalunya all of Spain's (its 'parent state') channels too – but those are the channels broadcasting from within their borders. Scotland? Zilch, nada, zero, the square root of hee-haw! We should have read the signs when Grampian Television, with its distinctive Saltire logo, was subsumed into Scottish Television which then none-too-subtly dropped both its thistle logo and the word 'Scottish' to rebrand as simply STV. But then, we've always got BBC Scotland, right? Stop laughing at the back!

As you'll all remember, in mid-September the UK State Broadcaster, aka the BBC, 'decided' to stop transmitting the First Minister of Scotland's daily Covid-19 briefings on their BBC Scotland 'channels'. Did they jump or were they pushed? Who knows, though Jackie Baillie and George Foulkes appeared to know, then suddenly didn't! The result was that those citizens of Scotland who still rely mainly or exclusively on mainstream media, and those who rely on sign-language, to get their news and information had an essential part of that provision taken away with the flimsiest of justification. To add insult to injury, the BBC then announced that they would only show the briefings if they judged them to be sufficiently newsworthy... Hang on, how exactly do you decide in advance if a LIVE broadcast is 'sufficiently newsworthy'? The BBC, being the BBC, had an answer to that – the FM would have to submit her 'script' to the BBC in advance so that the appropriate judgement could be made. But, by whom? BBC Scotland executives? Jackie Baillie and George Foulkes? Murdo Fraser? Dominic Cummings? Or BBC headquarters in London, in consultation with all of the above? Again, who knows, though I'm sure we all have our suspicions – do they really think wir heids button up the back? It all turned even more farcical quite quickly when they about turned on the very first day, depriving some of their audience

Scotland's broadcast media?



BBC Scotland

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2019 Independence march, Edinburgh



of that repeat of the *Battle of Britain Bargain Hunt Special* that they had eagerly anticipated all weekend! "You turn if you want to...", in the words of a previous right-wing zealot.

'Normal', is when you're... well... normal! There are 195 independent sovereign countries in the world, each with their own government, borders and trading relationships. They all issue passports, though a few issue them in agreement with another country – citizens of Greenland, for example, travel under a Danish passport in the same way as we Scots, currently, travel under a UK passport. But for the vast, vast majority we can add passports to the list of 'normal'. And, strangely enough, every single one of those 195 countries has a currency! There are 180 currencies in operation worldwide today so, just like we currently use the UK pound, some countries use somebody else's currency. But, again, for the vast majority, we can add currency to our list. We're far from being the only country in the world to have been tied to the UK, though in that respect we are part of a dwindling

We're far from being the only country in the world to have been tied to the UK, though in that respect we are part of a dwindling list, arguably the last colony

list, arguably the last colony. As our graphics show, more than 60 countries have seceded from the UK... and not a single one has ever sought to return to the 'safety' of the 'strong and stable broad shoulders' of the UK. No country that's gained, or regained, its independence has ever decided that, actually, we were 'better together'. Why is that? It's not complicated, it's because being independent is normal and once a country, once its people, has recognised that then they simply can't unsee that truth.

So, one way or another, we can – we must – restore our status as a normal independent country as soon as we possibly can, leaving behind the nightmare of Westminster rule, and take our place as equal partners on the European and world stage. And we can then immediately get to work on constructing our new normal in the post-Covid, post-colonial future based on our own Scottish values, traditions and ambitions. For myself, I can only repeat what I wrote a couple of issues back – I desperately want to see an independent republic of Scotland with a written, socially-just constitution that guarantees every citizen the right to free world-class healthcare and education supported by a welfare system that provides home, food and income security, backed by a Scottish central bank and our own sovereign currency. A nuclear-free and environmentally ambitious Scotland that is welcoming and international in outlook, with an open and engaging relationship with our European neighbours, either as a member of the EU or EFTA – like many, I'm open to persuasion. But I fully recognise that this doesn't reflect everybody's vision and that these are debates to be had, and can only be had, after independence is re-established. I would also like to see these debates take place in a modern, democratic way involving some form of constitutional and citizens' assemblies, as successfully demonstrated in recent times by countries such as Iceland and Ireland. I once heard Tommy Sheppard say something along the lines of, "on the first day of an independent Scotland, nothing will have changed except the ability to change everything", and that says it all for me. Let 2021 be the beginning of our new normal and, in the meantime, stay safe, stay healthy, and stay angry. Scotland will be normal again. Scotland will be independent again!