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A view from the nations

Scotland: Does Sturgeon want a referendum?

To the surprise of no-one, the SNP is set to comprehensively win the Scottish election. Nor is it surprising that there's a pro-independence majority in Holyrood. This has in fact been the case since 2011. What happens next is also predictable: a request for a Section 30 order, which – if we assume Prime Minister Boris Johnson sticks to his guns – will be rejected by the UK Government.

The SNP says in this scenario, its plan B is to legislate to hold a referendum anyway – an echo of what the Catalanian Government did in the face of the Spanish Government's veto.

But the leadership's stance towards plan B is decidedly ambiguous. First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and her allies have publicly demurred on the desirability of a wildcat Catalan-style plebiscite.

Here the unpredictability comes in. Sturgeon – a naturally cautious politician – wants to do things by the book. Blocked by Westminster (and even the Supreme Court), it is possible that she may prefer to keep advocating for independence in the abstract “future”, rather than confront complex questions about currency and borders.

Wales: Red-Green rising

COVID-19 has heightened the media attention given to Welsh politics, yet much of the past month has still been devoted to debating voter psephology in Hartlepool and Scotland.

In a way, the lack of fanfare that has accompanied Labour's success is testament to how their preponderance is almost taken as a given. After all, this will be its sixth Senedd election win in a row.

The party is helped by how Wales' opposition is split more or less evenly between a staunchly unionist party, the Conservatives, and a staunchly pro-independence one, Plaid – quashing any chance of an anti-Labour pact.

The prospect of a Labour-Plaid Cymru deal of some sort, a repeat of the 2007 election outcome, could help shake up Welsh politics – especially with the emergence of new voting demographics based around constitutional preferences. Polls have found more than half of all Labour supporters in favour of Welsh independence, while the party's leadership is markedly more agnostic about the survival of the UK than before.

While the new government will not be agitating for independence, expect it to pursue an increasingly robust approach towards its Westminster counterpart.

For more insight and analysis and what engaging with Holyrood or the Senedd could mean for your organisation, please email ioan@gkstrategy.com