

Gordon Craigie

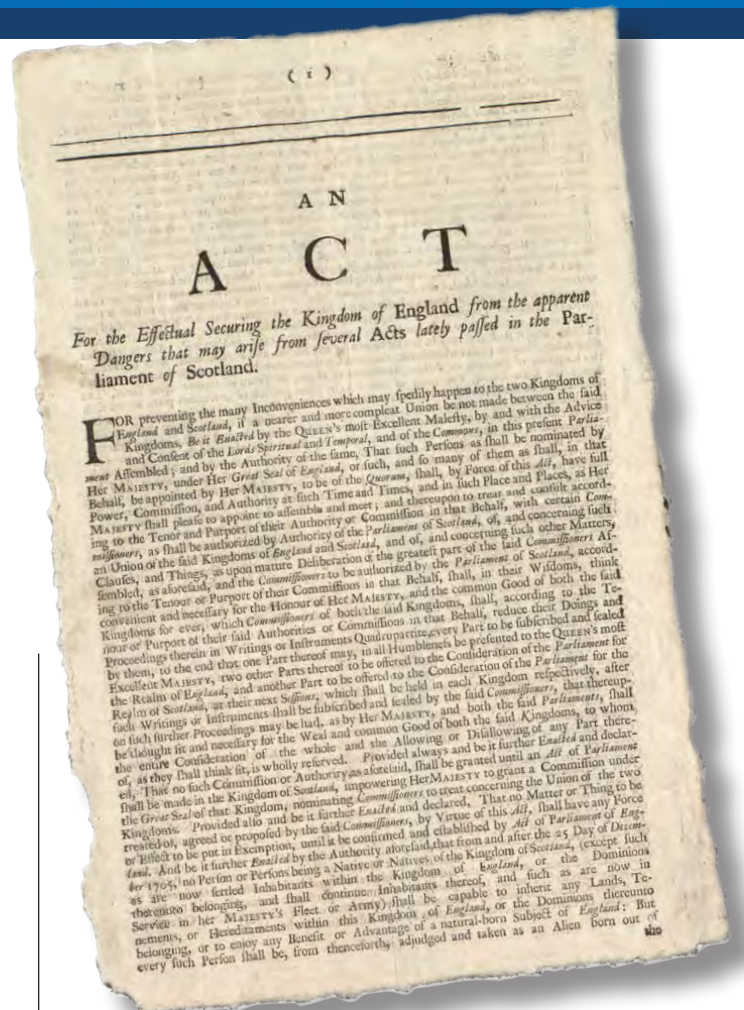


An independent mind...

This month, I'm revisiting another pivotal part of Scotland's history as an English/British colony – Rule Britannia, Britannia waives the rules...

THE CURRENT political and geopolitical climate is far too unpredictable to be able to write anything remotely topical in a monthly publication without it inevitably becoming 'yesterday's chip paper' long before this issue of *iScot Magazine* actually drops through your letterbox or lands on your tablet. But fear not, dear reader, as many of the shenanigans of this 'post-truth' era have striking parallels with the lies and malevolent subterfuge that have been visited upon Scotland and the Scots by the English/British ruling classes for centuries. So, as we ready ourselves for the latest yet-to-be-declared screeching U-turn of the Starmer regime – even though he himself may be 'out of date' by the time you read this! – it's worth revisiting an article from seven years ago (!) about how the idea of a rules-based international order was as fanciful in bygone times as it appears to be now.

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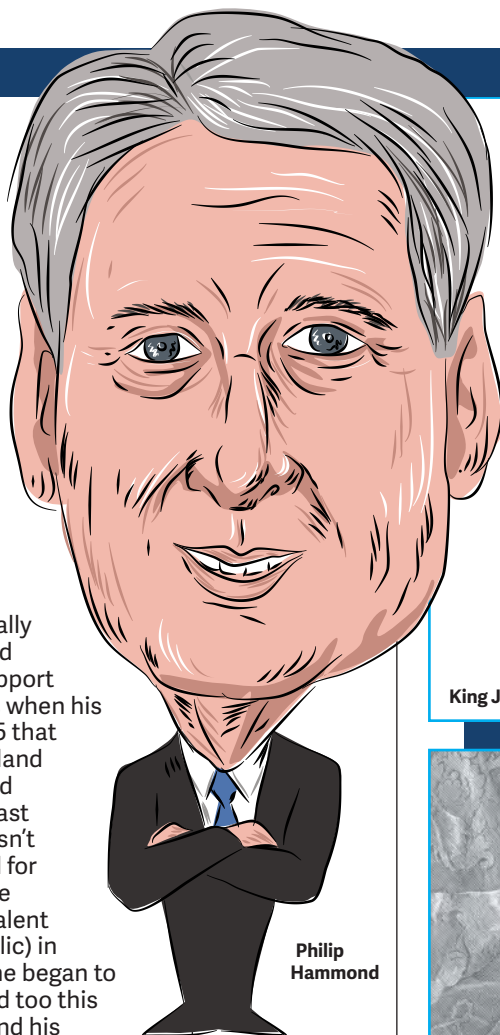
Rule Britannia, Britannia waives the rules...

As we all know, jolly old Great Britain™ has warm and cuddly ex-pat communities all over the world while citizens of other nations reciprocally living in the UK are less warm and cuddly and are, more threateningly, designated as immigrants or aliens. It seems that this British Nationalist obsession with aliens is a recurring theme – were we not warned, prior to our 2014 Independence Referendum, that an independent Scotland would be at greater risk of being invaded by those other aliens, the little green monster

extra-terrestrial types? (Strange but true, courtesy of the then UK Defence Secretary and future Chancellor, Philip Hammond when he claimed an independent Scotland would face a greater threat from space – get a grip!) But, if we look even further back, to the early 1700s, it was us rebellious Scots who were threatened with actually becoming aliens simply to suit the purposes of our superior English needs...

It's a complicated era of our history, but the root causes of many of the events in the early 1700s can be traced back to the religious, military, and royal shenanigans of the 1500s, culminating in the Union of the Crowns in 1603. James the VI and I had initially favoured uniting the parliaments of Scotland and England too, but this found no great support on either side of the border. However, it was when his son, Charles I, acceded to the throne in 1625 that the relationship between Scotland and England began to get even more confused than it had previously been. Charles, (incidentally, the last British monarch to be born in Scotland), wasn't very popular in England due to his disregard for their parliament – between 1629 and 1640 he ruled England without one! – and his ambivalent attitude to Catholicism (he married a Catholic) in the face of the English Reformation. When he began to try and influence religious affairs in Scotland too this was violently resisted, forcing Charles to send his army North to 'sort out' the Scots. A Scottish army firstly repelled Charles' troops at Berwick in 1639, in the so-called Bishops War. Then, when he came back for another go the following year, his efforts were eventually ended when the Scottish army was victorious at the Battle of Newburn and thus captured Newcastle and the county of Durham, whereupon Charles decided maybe he'd best leave Scottish religious matters to the Scots. The subsequent Treaty of Ripon decreed that Charles would recompense the Scots at the rate of £850 for each day they occupied Newcastle and Durham – that's worth around £180,000 in today's money. Per day! I did mention this was all complicated – and, as always with exposés of English/British establishment skulduggery, it's important to 'follow the money'...

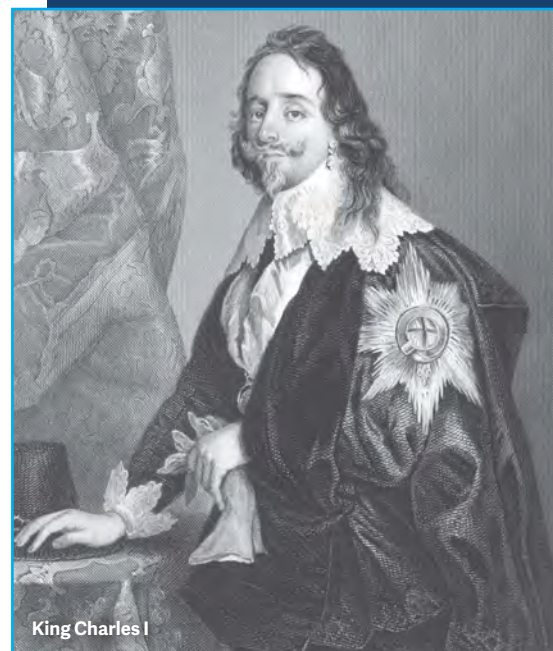
Anyway, Charles' uneasy relationship with Scotland was nothing compared to his relationship with the English Parliament which would eventually result in the English Civil War. Led by Oliver Cromwell, the New Model Army was formed by English parliamentarians in order to defeat their royalist opposition and remove Charles from power. As with most dictators, Cromwell appears to have exceeded his remit by spilling the English Civil War over into Scotland in 1650 because the Scots had the audacity to name Charles' son, Charles II, as King after the English had executed his father – Cromwell had effectively abolished the monarchy in England and declared 'The Commonwealth of England'. In 1652 the English Parliament unilaterally decided that Scotland would also be part of this Commonwealth – anyone else experiencing déjà vu here? This was never to be formally ratified, though that didn't stop Cromwell from occupying Scotland, forcing Charles II into exile, and abolishing the Scottish Parliament. A particularly unsettling 10-year period followed but eventually Scotland returned to normality in 1660 when Charles II was restored to the throne, and the Scottish Parliament was reconvened the following year.



Philip Hammond



King James VI and I



King Charles I



King Charles II

He claimed an independent Scotland would face a greater threat from space – get a grip!

The cross-border political, religious, and monarchical machinations continued to rumble on however and, in 1701, in order to ensure that England would never again, under any circumstances, have a Catholic monarch, the English Parliament passed its Act of Settlement. Unsurprisingly, despite the Union of the Crowns agreement having been in force for almost a century, they didn't take any heed of Scotland's opposition to this decree. The Scottish Parliament's response was to formulate its own Act of Security, which passed in 1704, asserting Scotland's right to choose its own monarch, irrespective of religion, as Queen Anne's eventual successor. And this is where the effluent appears to have really hit the fan as far as England was concerned!



Oliver Cromwell

Queen Anne



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Historian William Ferguson, writing in *The Scottish Historical Review* in 1964, explains that, on acceding to the throne, Queen Anne (the last of the Stuart monarchs) had devolved the task of looking after 'Scottish affairs' to her English parliamentarians, in particular her Lord Treasurer, Lord Godolphin. Ferguson describes him as, "An able financier but not an outstanding statesman, he knew little of Scotland and cared less ... His one policy for Scotland was to keep it quiet and subservient, and the less troublesome the means the better." Professor Karin Bowie, writing in the same journal some 40 years later, cites Ferguson as having "argued that Union was a 'political job' in which the Court used economic incentives, patronage, and bribery to secure the passage of the Union treaty in the Scottish Parliament to satisfy English political imperatives". Hmm...

The UK Parliament's official website, www.parliament.uk, records that there were two proposals put before the English Parliament in 1705: "One offered fresh negotiations for a full incorporating Union [with Scotland], with a single parliament and unified free trade area. The other, an Aliens Bill, threatened that unless Scotland agreed to negotiate terms for Union and accepted the Hanoverian succession by 25 December 1705, there would be a ban on the import of all Scottish staple products into England. Scots would also lose the privileges of Englishmen under English law - thus endangering rights to any property they held in England." In other words, we could agree peacefully to lose our nationhood and be wholly ruled from London, politically and royally, or we would become alien nationals with no rights to own land in, or to conduct trade within, England. Aye, the old 'carrot and stick' approach to diplomacy. Looks like our southern neighbours' reputation for fair play, love, and friendship towards Scotland – anyone else remember "Don't leave the Union, lead the Union"? – isn't only a recent phenomenon!

But what really brought about this desire to bring Scotland into the political fold? Why was the complete unification of Britannia deemed to be a good thing for either England or Scotland? As today, the two countries appeared to be entirely, and increasingly, at odds. There was no agreement on religion, no agreement on monarchy, and no agreement on foreign allies. England, outwardly, thought Scotland a poor and impoverished country – despite Scotland having zero national debt in contrast to England's £3.2 billion (in today's money) – and was wary of the military threat afforded by Scotland's Auld Alliance with France, viewing Scotland as a 'rogue nation'. It's only a short hop from describing us as a 'rogue nation' to designating our citizens as 'alien nationals' and the English Parliament seized upon the notion in order to force the Scottish nobility towards accepting a full political and monarchical Union with England. As *iScot Magazine* demonstrated last month, in our [revisited] Darien feature, the Scottish elite of the time gladly took up the opportunity of having their personal Darien losses refunded, and their lands in England retained, in return for Scotland (the country, and all its citizens) assuming a share of that English national debt – it's worth recalling again Rabbie's famous line, "We're bought and sold for English gold, sic a parcel o' rogues in a nation"!

Agreements? Treaties? International accords? Rules? These have never applied to Britannia, jolly old Great Britain™, and that arrogance and sense of entitlement carries on to the present day. The parallels with Brexit, the British Nationalist response to the second Scottish Independence Referendum triple mandate, and even the Tory leadership fiasco, are uncanny. (Remember, this was

GO-ALONE SCOTLAND FACES 'THREATS FROM SPACE'

THE pro-Union campaign has already been mocked for warning that 'forces of darkness' would welcome independence.

But Defence Secretary Philip Hammond stunned observers yesterday by declaring that a separate Scotland would be more vulnerable to threats... from space.

The Tory minister did not expand on his comment and a government insider said the nature of such threats was 'classified'.

The bizarre episode will infuriate Better Together campaign leaders who are desperate to present a more 'positive' case for the Union.

Mr Hammond has been responsible for a series of gaffes and only this week said 'everything' would be up for negotiation if the SNP wins September's referendum.

That undermined his party's only MP north of the Border, Scotland

Office Minister David Mundell, who at the weekend said there was 'no deal to be done' over the Trident nuclear missile system.

Mr Hammond said: 'In the past, the threats we faced came only from the sea, from land and, more recently, from the air. Now, they also come from two new domains - space and cyber-space - and from non-state protagonists as well as from nation states.'

Defence experts believe Mr Hammond was referring to cyber attacks on satellites by countries such as China.

An SNP spokesman said: 'First we had [former NATO chief] Lord George Robertson warning of the "forces of darkness", and now we have Philip Hammond predicting attacks from space. The No campaign really is on a different planet.'

originally written in 2019 – now, in 2026, it appears odds-on there'll be a corresponding Labour leadership fiasco very, very soon!) Today, those who hold differing opinions or nationalities are routinely 'othered' by the English/British Establishment, just as we Scots were othered and designated as 'aliens' to help enforce a Treaty of Union that the people of Scotland rejected overwhelmingly over 300 years ago. This is precisely the kind of history that we were never taught in school, but Bowie writes that, in the lead-up to that Union being 'agreed', "Pro-unionists rejected any suggestion that parliamentary representatives were required to follow the instructions of their constituents", while Ferguson concludes, "it cannot be regarded as a natural consummation or even a triumph for honesty and right reason". Aye, some things never change right enough – now, as then, Britannia waives the rules.

So, there we go, the more things change the more they stay the same. The English/British establishment still believe that they know best what Scots want and need. The fact that we've elected a pro-independence devolved parliament for almost 20 years now doesn't figure in their reckoning when they arrogantly assert that "people in Scotland aren't interested in independence". Aided and abetted by a totally corrupt, bought-and-paid-for media they simply chunter out the lies and the falsehoods on a daily basis without ever being challenged or corrected. By the way, who decided that the Sunday morning political interviews should become the standard vehicle for government ministers to announce policies and bare-facedly lie to the viewing public about anything and everything? And since when did these programmes, along with the totally discredited Question Time, become the direct route into our homes for obnoxious charlatans like Farage et al. to 'build their profile' and drip feed their poisonous views into the mainstream? One of them even attempted to resurrect the Clown Prince Johnson's political career by allowing him airtime to wax lyrical about his Churchillian war-mongering tendencies! Next they'll be inviting on Tony Blair to give us the benefit of his wisdom on everything from illegal wars to privatising the NHS...

It just doesn't have to be this way in Scotland. Unlike in 1707 we, the people, **do** have the opportunity to register our democratic views at the ballot box. And despite the regrettable splintering of much of the independence movement there's still a way for us to progress our cause in May, but we must unite in order to maximise that opportunity. It's a strange quirk that the Alba Party was formed too late to have any impact on the 2021 election and has now crashed and burned before being able to affect this one but, as the cliché goes, every cloud has a silver lining. There is a danger from having too many pro-independence choices on the list ballot paper and, in my opinion, this is where independistas

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have to choose wisely. For me, I firmly believe that "both votes SNP" is a flawed strategy, though I understand why the SNP high heid-yins feel they have to promote that. It's an equally flawed strategy for independistas who have been scunnered by the SNP, for whatever reason, to refuse to vote for them in the constituency ballot.

And one of the unintended consequences of the English/British media bias may well end up working in favour of the Scottish Greens – under Zack Polanski's leadership, the Green Party of England and Wales are gathering momentum and gaining a lot of positive publicity. Because we are force fed UK news in Scotland, much of this favourable exposure will inevitably be cutting through with Scottish voters, and the new Scottish Greens leadership team have been very canny in working out an alliance with the redoubtable Polanski – they've also been very vocal and positive about their support for independence. At this stage the most important factor at this Holyrood election may well be turnout, so please, if you truly want a better future for all of us and recognise that this can only happen through independence... vote, and vote tactically. I'll be voting SNP on the constituency and for the best-placed pro-independence party or person on the list. Will you join me? Saor Alba!