

# Independence Day?

by Simon Geall

## Independence Day?

**There has been much discussion recently about the possibility of Guernsey becoming an independent state, rather than a Crown dependency. Similar discussions are afoot (indeed, are at a more advanced stage) in our sister island of Jersey.**

The primary catalyst for this discussion seems to be the perceived failure of the UK to represent the interests of the island on the international stage, most notably at EU level, for example in the negotiations concerning the EU Code of Conduct on Business Taxation (which resulted in 'Zero Ten' being adopted).

It is clear that such a momentous decision would require a referendum of the people. But, would independence be a good thing? Amongst other things it would impact on the following areas of our lives:

### Citizenship

Most readers of this article will have travelled between Guernsey or Jersey and their destination without the need to produce a passport. Independence could lead to an end to the constitutional convention that British passports are issued to all islanders by the Lieutenant Governor of the Bailiwick in question. Further, legislation would need to be enacted to frame the requirements for an individual to qualify as a citizen of the island.

### Defence and International Security

The UK is currently responsible for the defence of the islands. It is unlikely that this privilege would continue on the advent of independence. Alternatives could include: joining NATO; creating our own defence force; concluding a defence agreement with a neighbour. Any cost consequences would need to be carefully calculated against the harsh reality, as borne out in history, that the islands would be unable to repel an attack in the unlikely event of an assault by invading forces.

### International Agreements

Independence would, in all likelihood, sever our current relationship with the EU (which most see as being beneficial). Would any re-negotiation of terms with the EU lead to a less beneficial relationship? The same is true of other international agreements and treaties. Would Guernsey really have a voice on the global stage?

### Conclusion

At the time of writing this article, I am supporting the Guernsey football team in Croatia, who are representing the English FA after winning a national qualifying competition. It is unlikely that the Guernsey FA would have had this opportunity had the island been an independent state. Will that ever happen? Possibly so, but I would suggest that a significant amount of further research, discussions and debate is necessary first. After all, some of us might prefer to be playing with Steven Gerrard rather than against him.

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