

**Houston Area
Model United Nations
Specialized Committee**



BHOC

**Chair | Aruna Muthupillai
Specialized Committee Background Guide
Houston Area Model United Nations 48
February 2-3, 2023**

Copyright Notice

The contents of this document and any supplementary material are the sole intellectual property of Houston Area Model United Nations.

It may not be reproduced, republished, or used without the express written permission of Houston Area Model United Nations. Please email staff@houstonareamun.org with any questions.

Note to Delegates

Delegates,

My name is Aruna Muthupillai and I am very excited to serve as your BHOC chair this year at HAMUN 48! I am currently a student at the University of Texas double majoring in Plan II Honors and International Relations/Global Studies with a potential minor in sustainability.

As you may already know, this year is the first time in 2 years that HAMUN will be in-person and I cannot be more delighted to be a part of this conference again. I sincerely hope that you will take full advantage of the various opportunities that a “real” conference provides. However, if any of you are nervous about the prospect of participating in front of other people, don’t worry. I know how you feel. My first year in HAMUN, I was petrified of the idea of public speaking and probably spoke a grand total of 2 sentences. Not to be cliché but with experience, everything gets easier. After pushing myself to work harder, I went on to become the President of Glenda Dawson MUN and win Best Delegate three times in a row at HAMUN.

Therefore as your chair, I encourage you to step outside of your comfort zone this year and set concrete goals that you would like to accomplish. Whether it be giving one speech during conference or leading a block, I want you to strive to be the best delegate that you can be.

What makes this year even more fun is that BHOC is a “special” specialized committee. Since we will be emulating the spirit and some of the practices within the BHOC, I look forward to seeing both your adaptability and problem-solving initiative as a delegate. As a chair, I value integrity so come into conference with an open mind but make sure to stay true to the identity of your character! Our topics regarding the possibility of Scottish Independence and the ongoing migrant crisis are both extremely serious topics; so while I do not mind a bit of fun, please make sure to respect the sensitivity of the issues at hand and the office of which you are representing.

Now, as a last bit of advice, come into conference prepared but don’t worry too much about “winning” or “losing.” Something that I always teach my delegates is that the best delegate brings out the best in other delegates. So take every opportunity to jump up and speak, but also encourage others to do the same. Push to have your ideas heard, but also be willing to compromise and create a better solution. Last of all, be competitive but not at the expense of collaboration.

Best of luck and I look forward to seeing you all in action!

Aruna Muthupillai

Chair of BHOC

arunamuthupillai@utexas.edu

SPECIAL PROCEDURE

We will follow **standard Parliamentary Procedure** during the majority of debate. However, as delegates are already sorted into political parties, debate will be shorter to make time for the introduction/voting on of bills.

Standard procedure for:

- Motion to open debate
- Motion to set the topic
- Motion to open a Speaker's List
- Moderated Caucuses
- Unmoderated Caucuses
- Points (Inquiry, Order, Personal Privilege)

However, once "bills (resolutions)" are created, they are then introduced to parliament. This is where we will **integrate some parts of British House of Commons procedures.**

In the British House of Commons, motions are used to introduce bills and begin debating. In our case, MPs must make a motion in order to begin debate on their bill.

- "I move that we begin to discuss _____"

In order for the motion to reach the floor, the motion must be seconded by another MP. The second can come from anyone in the room and the MP that seconds does not have to be recognized by the Chair to second.

- "Seconded!"

Then, the Chair (or the Speaker) must repeat the motion and then all MPs may discuss the bill.

- "It is moved and seconded that we discuss _____"

To speak on the motion, MPs must be called upon by the chair to speak. The structure of debate over a bill is in the form of questioning (those that introduced or created the bill stand at the front of the assembly to present the bill then other MPs ask questions). As debate on the bill progresses, the MPs who created the bill may amend the bill on the floor by 1. Inserting 2. Striking or 3. Substituting with the permission of those that created the bill.

SPECIAL PROCEDURE

Once the debate has exhausted (~30 mins), the Chair will put the motion to the vote. Every MP must vote audibly with either “AYE” or “NAY.”

Should the bill have majority “AYE,” the bill will be “adopted.”

The committee will then move onto the next bill. Once all bills are discussed, there will be a standard motion to close debate. The committee will then move onto the next topic.

What to Expect Coming In...

You will be seated in accordance with your party on either the right side or left side of the room. The majority party will be seated on the right with the Prime Minister in the center. On the left, opposition leaders will be seated at the front of their respective parties. The Chair will be seated at the front-center and MPs will stand to make motions and debate from where they are seated. Opening speeches will be made at the front.

Format of Bills:

Sponsors:

Signatories:

Title:

Whereas, The... (the first preamble clause).

Whereas, The... (the last preamble clause).

Resolved, That...(States the action to be taken).

Resolved, That...(States further action to be taken).

Resolved, That...(States still further action to be taken).

****Special Note

Liz Truss has resigned. Rishi Sunak will act as the new PM while Liz Truss will act as just another Conservative PM.



Photograph: UK Parliament



BHOC

Chair | Aruna Muthupillai

Houston Area Model United Nations 48

February 2-3, 2023

BHOC

BHOC stands for the British House of Commons. The House of Commons is the lower house in the Parliament of the United Kingdom. In contrast to the upper house (The House of Lords), the House of Commons is popularly elected. Aiming to represent over 68 million British Citizens, the House of Commons consists of 650 Members of Parliament (MPs)

BHOC dates back to the second half of 13th century England. Although the House of Lords was originally the more powerful house, as Britain has democratized, the House of Commons has gradually taken on more power than the House of Lords. Under the Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949, the House of Lords now only has the power to delay legislation. Furthermore, the House of Commons also has more power (in practice) than the sovereign. In fact, the last time a sovereign rejected a bill was in 1707.

The House of Commons is the effective legislative authority in Great Britain. It alone has the right to impose taxes and control funding. However, the right to declare war still remains with the monarch. Almost all legislation proceeds from the majority party in the Commons, which forms the government and the cabinet; the latter is composed of senior ministers chosen by, and belonging to the party of, the Prime Minister (PM), nearly all of whom serve in the House of Commons. Currently, the PM Liz Truss belongs to the Conservative Party. It is also important to note that since the Fixed Terms Parliament Act of 2011, general elections are held every 5 years. However, at any time before the 5 year maximum, the present government can call elections.



HOUSE OF COMMONS



Topic B: Scottish Independence

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2016, the Conservative Party of the UK scraped past a referendum to leave the European Union (EU) with 51.9% of the public vote cast in favor of leaving the EU. After almost 4 years of negotiation, the UK finally left the EU on January 31st 2020.

However, while the majority of the UK voted in favor of Brexit in 2016, most residents of Scotland (62%) favored remaining in the EU.

In a statement released at the time of the vote, First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon said, “As things stand, Scotland faces the prospect of being taken out of the E.U. against our will. [...] I regard that as democratically unacceptable.”

The alternative, a Scottish departure from the United Kingdom, would be a shock to a union that has existed for more than 300 years. And though Scottish voters rejected independence with a resounding no as recently as 2014, that was before Brexit was on the table.

In recent months, Sturgeon and other members of the pro-independence Scottish National Party have floated the possibility of a second referendum. Given the “material change of circumstance” since the 2014 vote, the argument goes, Scots are likely to arrive at a new consensus.





Topic B: Scottish Independence

TOPIC HISTORY

The idea of Scottish independence is not a new debate. Since the medieval period and the time of William Wallace, Scotland has struggled to maintain its sovereignty in the face of threats from its Southern neighbor England.

When Elizabeth I died childless in 1603, an opportunity arose for unification between the neighboring nations. The deceased monarch's distant cousin James VI of Scotland, son of Mary, Queen of Scots, took the English and Irish thrones as James I, becoming the first monarch to unite the three nations under one crown.

Following the Glorious Revolution, England and Scotland were officially united in 1707. Under the unification, Scotland gained economic security and access to England's extensive trade network. Under the Acts of Union, Scotland retained its legal, religious and educational systems but joined the

British Parliament.

However, even then, the Scottish Parliament voted to accept the union by a "fairly lukewarm majority" dominated by members of the nobility.

Modern Scotland

By the 18th century, Scotland and England had a largely unified identity bolstered by the countries' shared conflicts with other members of the British Empire, including the American colonies and Ireland. Scotland's textile industry thrived, sparking industrialization and urbanization, and Scots gained more power within the British government.

However, the concept of Scottish independence had not disappeared. In 1913, Member of Parliament William Cowan introduced a bill aimed at creating a separate Scottish parliament.

In 1934, the National Party of Scotland and the Scottish Party joined together to form the Scottish National Party. With the discovery of oil off Scotland's North Sea coast during the 1970s, the party's message started to resonate in Parliament.



Topic B: Scottish Independence

REFERENDUM



Photograph: Abercrombie and Kent

In 1997, ideas about increased Scottish independence manifested in the **1997 Scottish devolution referendum**. This referendum was a Labour party proposal over whether there was support for the creation of a Scottish Parliament with devolved powers, and whether the Parliament should have tax-varying powers. The result was "Yes-Yes": a majority voted in favour of both proposals, and the Scottish Parliament was established following an election in 1999. In some regards, this referendum and the idea of devolution was an attempt to stymie the demand for independence. But for the SNP, devolution was simply a "stepping stone" on the path to a fully autonomous Scotland.

As predicted by many, devolution was only a temporary remedy for desires for independence.

By the 2010s, Scottish independence was back on the table—and in full force. A referendum on Scottish independence from the United Kingdom was held in Scotland on 18 **September 2014**. The referendum question was, "Should Scotland be an independent country?" Only 44.7% of participants voted "Yes" and thus, the referendum failed.



Photograph: GettyImages



Topic B: Scottish Independence

REASONS FOR AND AGAINST REFERENDUM

The “Yes” Campaign

The discovery of new North Sea oil revenues were a large driver for the yes campaign. The yes campaign argued that the country’s growing economy, not based on oil alone, would be capable of sustaining welfare spending, including its pensions debt and the childcare plans outlined in the Scottish government’s mission statements. Furthermore, power to decide how to spend its entire budget would allow Scotland to scrap the spending on nuclear weapons that it is committed to as part of the UK.

Another key part of the pro-independence argument is that independence would allow the Scottish electorate to have the governments they vote for. Scotland consistently votes to the left of the rest of the UK. Since 2001, the country has voted only one Conservative MP into Westminster but is now governed by a Conservative-led coalition.

Other key arguments include: A Fair Work Commission, the abolition of the bedroom tax,” green technology rollout, and representation in the European Union.



The “No” Campaign

The “Better Together” campaign was the main opposition force to Scottish independence. They argued that “the future Scotland's prosperity will be strengthened by keeping the British connection. We need more growth, more jobs, and more prosperity in Scotland. We don't need uncertainty, instability, and barriers for our businesses.” Furthermore, the campaign stressed that the strength of the UK’s market would be an advantage in a competitive world.



Topic B: Scottish Independence

The “Better Together” campaign also argued that the British Armed Forces strengthen Scotland’s security.

The last fundamental argument against Scottish independence is centered upon the idea of a unified Scottish and British national identity. The below statement from the campaign exemplifies this idea:

“Hundreds of thousands of Scots and English have made their homes in each other's nation. Half of us have English neighbours. Hundreds of thousands of Scots were born in England. This interdependence - the coming together of family, friends, ideas, institutions and identities - is a strength not a weakness, and is an ideal worth celebrating. The truth is we're better together.”

Current Developments

Although Nicola Sturgeon (Scotland’s first minister) put on hold plans to host a second independence referendum per the coronavirus pandemic, she has revived plans for a possible second Scottish independence referendum,

pledging to publish draft legislation for a new vote before next May’s elections for the parliament in Edinburgh. According to a recent policy programme, the combination of the impact of the pandemic and the UK’s exit from the EU showed the “limitations” of the devolved Scottish parliament’s ability to “protect and renew” the country.

But, there is a question about whether the Scottish government can hold a referendum without Westminster’s consent. The case on a referendum on Scottish Independence has been referred to the Supreme Court. As of now, should Scottish independence want to succeed, the mission must have Westminster’s support.





Topic B: Scottish Independence

PARTY STANCES

The Conservative Party

Liz Truss has suggested a second vote on independence should not go ahead even if the Supreme Court deems the Scottish Government's case for holding one as legally sound. Speaking to ITV Border, Ms Truss was asked "if the Supreme Court rules another referendum is legal, will you be leading the campaign to keep Scotland in the Union?" She said: "I'm very clear that in 2014, when there was a referendum, we said it is once in a generation."

The Labour Party

Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar rejected Sturgeon's proposals for a new referendum, saying that instead of re-opening the wounds of a divisive independence campaign, a new constitutional settlement could be reached by reforming Britain's institutions. He proposed abolishing the unelected second chamber, the House of Lords, and replacing it with a directly elected Senate of the Nations and Regions, a policy proposal that he said would be considered by a Labour commission into the future of the United Kingdom.

The Liberal Democrats

Although the Liberal Democrats were firmly opposed to Brexit, they also firmly reject the idea of Scottish independence.

The Democratic Unionists

Democratic Unionist Party MP Ian Paisley Jr was speaking against a yes vote in the Scottish independence referendum on 18 September.

He said that a "division in this wonderful union" would have "an unnerving and unsettling effect".

Scottish National Party

The SNP is spearheading the Scottish independence movement. They hope to get a new referendum out into the public by October 2023.

SNP ⚡



Topic B: Scottish Independence

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Should Scotland be allowed to hold a second referendum for independence?
- Is there any alternative to independence that would satisfy the SNP?
- Does Scotland have the capacity/resources to maintain an independent state?



Character List:

Conservative Party:

Rishi Sunak
Liz Truss
Grant Shapps
Domonic Raab
Mr Alister Jack
Priti Patel
Ben Wallace
Shailesh Vara
Sir Robert Buckland
Kit Malhouse
Steve Barclay
Kwasi Kwarteng
Anne-Marie Trevelyan

Labour Party:

Keir Starmer
Anneliese Dodds
Kate Osborne
Liz Twist
Ian Murray
Shabana Mahmood
Rachel Reeves
David Lammy
John Healey
Jo Stevens
Mark Tami

Democratic Unionists

Jeffery Donaldson
Gregory Campbell
Paul Girvan
Michelle Gildernew
Paul Maskey

Scottish National Party

Ian Blackford
Kirsten Oswald
Richard Thomson
Alison Thewliss
Stuart McDonald
Drew Hendry
Philippa Whitford
David Linden

Liberal Democrats:

Ed Davey
Daisy Cooper
Christine Jardine
Alistar Carmichael
Layla Moran
Wendy Chamberlain
Sarah Olbey



Sources

“1997 Scottish Devolution Referendum.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 1 Sept. 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1997_Scottish_devolution_referendum.

“2016 United Kingdom European Union Membership Referendum.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 5 Oct. 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_United_Kingdom_European_Union_membership_referendum.

About the author LSE British Politics and Policy All articles posted on this blog give the views of the author(s), et al. “Would the Scots Vote for Independence? the Answer Could Depend on the Question.” *British Politics and Policy at LSE*, 5 Oct. 2021, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/would-the-scots-vote-for-independence/>.

“Here's an Impartial Take on What Independence Would Mean for the Scotland-England Border – Dr Alison Smith.” *The Scotsman*, 14 Feb. 2022, <https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/what-independence-would-mean-for-the-scotland-england-border-dr-alison-smith-3567229>.

“Lib Dems Vow to Vote against Scottish Independence 'at Every Opportunity'.” *The Scotsman*, 29 Nov. 2019, <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/lib-dems-vow-vote-against-scottish-independence-every-opportunity-1401046>.

Magazine, Smithsonian. “A Not-so-Brief History of Scottish Independence.” *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 30 Jan. 2020, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/brief-history-scottish-independence-180973928/>.

“Nicola Sturgeon Unveils Case for Scottish Independence.” *BBC News*, BBC, 14 June 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-61796883>.

Person, and Michael Holden. “UK Top Court to Hear Scottish Independence Vote Bid.” *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, 7 Oct. 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-top-court-hear-scottish-independence-vote-bid-2022-10-07/>.

Sources

“Scotland's Future.” *Scottish Government*,
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-future/pages/2/>.

“Scottish Independence: Will There Be a Second Referendum?” *BBC News*, BBC, 9 Oct. 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-50813510>.

Show authors Alistair Burnett Former Managing Director, and Show authors. “Scottish Independence Will Impact the UK's Global Role.” *Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank*, 7 July 2021,
<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/05/scottish-independence-will-impact-uks-global-role>.

UK, The Huffington Post. “Against Scottish Independence: Arguments and Reasons for a No Vote.” *HuffPost UK*, HuffPost UK, 4 Mar. 2014,
https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/03/04/against-scottish-independence-no-vote_n_4895582.html.

“The Wars of Independence.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.,
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Scotland/The-Wars-of-Independence>.

