Position paper  
Delegation from Olivia Fawcett

Isabella Macduff – Scottish war of Independence, Scotland

Isabella Macduff, countess of Buchan, daughter of the Earl of Fife, is a medieval Scottish heroine and featured character of many historical Scot authors and romantics. Commemorated as defiant and proud, embellished as passionate, witty and bold, she is heir to a powerful Clan and holds the divine right to crown her beloved country’s Monarch[[1]](#footnote-1). Isabella is vested to see the right King win the race to the throne, and determined to stand by his side through the following turbulent times. Hailing from the Macduffs, distantly related to the Clan of Bruce, and married into the Clan of Comyn, Isabella sits precariously between the two main rivals contending for the throne[[2]](#footnote-2). She is putting herself in a dangerous position, no matter her choice. It is paramount for her to make the right decision.

Issue 1 – Selection process of the candidates for the Scottish throne

Isabella hails from the Clan of Macduff, one of the most – if not the most – powerful families of Scotland. Since the reign of Malcolm III, members of the Clan of Macduff hold the divine, hereditary right to crown the Scottish royalty[[3]](#footnote-3). Isabella’s approval of a candidate becomes paramount in that regard, since the lack of a Macduff representative can be used as an argument for illegitimacy. Although Isabella is a distant cousin of Robert de Bruce 7th (and possibly, though unlikely, his mistress) she was married to the Earl of Buchan, hailing from the powerful clan of Comyn[[4]](#footnote-4). The Comyns are the main rivals to the Clan of Bruce, relentless supporters of the Lord John Balliol, and extremely influential[[5]](#footnote-5).

In historical accuracy, Isabella is bold and unpersuaded by the power of her husband, John Comyn, and his ties to Edward I. She defies him to crown Robert de Bruce at Scone[[6]](#footnote-6). However, this importantly takes place after the death of both John Balliol and the murder of the Red Comyn, Isabella’s cousin-in-law, a contender for the crown in his own right[[7]](#footnote-7). In this SSUNS debate, with all three alive with their own powerful supporters, it becomes more unclear who Countess Isabella might support. She is a vested Scotswoman, headstrong and proud of her beloved nation, and eager to see the relinquishing of control of Edward I. She would want an intelligent, confidant King to lead her country to victorious independence. Should she decide John Balliol is too meek, and the Clan of Bruce is the better choice, I hold true that Isabella holds no fear of the consequences of defying the Clan of Comyn. While still open to persuasion, I believe Isabella is biased to supporting the claim of the Clan of Bruce, either Robert the 5th or 7th.

Issue 2 – Scottish Independence and coexistence with England

It’s unclear whether Countess Macduff lived to see her country’s independence, as the last clear mentioning of her is her imprisonment by the English King in her famous cage[[8]](#footnote-8). Regardless of whether she likes or dislikes the English crown, she is determined to see Scotland free. Countess Macduff might not want the path of war over diplomacy, as she doesn’t have military prowess to contribute. War would also put her at risk of fighting against her family, as her brother is held hostage by King Edward’s court. Isabella would find herself more useful by means of diplomacy. Yet, in the end, should armed conflict prove itself the best means of obtaining Scotland’s independence, Isabella is not one to shy away from drawing arms.

1. <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/scotlandshistory/warsofindependence/isobeloffife/index.asp> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.clanmacduff.org/history.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.clanmacduff.org/history.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.scotclans.com/this-week-in-history-isabella-macduff-and-robert-the-bruce/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.prisonersofeternity.co.uk/isabella-of-fife-crowning-the-bruce/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <http://www.prisonersofeternity.co.uk/isabella-of-fife-crowning-the-bruce/> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <http://www.scotclans.com/this-week-in-history-isabella-macduff-and-robert-the-bruce/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <http://www.scotclans.com/this-week-in-history-isabella-macduff-and-robert-the-bruce/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)