

ROUNDTABLE

The Scottish independence referendum: what happened and what next?

The aftershocks of the recent referendum on Scottish independence continue to be felt across the United Kingdom. The increased popular support for Scottish independence; the enhanced devolutionary powers granted to Scotland; and the greater political salience of the English question all now pose significant new challenges to the British state, constitution and economic model. Renewal gathers here four reflections on the meaning of the referendum and its implications for the future.

A collection of rocks in the North Atlantic

Adam Ramsay, Co-Editor of *Our Kingdom on OpenDemocracy* and author of *42 Reasons to Support Scottish Independence* (2014)

I'm Scottish, but I live in Oxford, and as such I had a rather strange perspective on the referendum, wanting to be at home but finding myself in this little corner of the South East. The result was that, as the one Scottish person everyone knew, I always got the same questions. The first of those was: 'Why don't you have a Scottish accent?'

I often found that was quite a useful way to explain the answers to a lot of the rest of the questions. There's a long version and a short one, and the long answer is that in 1609 King James VI, as we call him, gathered together the Scottish nobility on the Island of Iona and made them sign a treaty, the Statutes of Iona, which, among other things, said they had to send their sons to English rather than Gaelic-speaking schools. The Statutes of Iona were the start of a process of the anglicisation of the Scottish elite, and thus the construction of modern Britain as we know it. The short answer is: 'I'm a bit posh'.

The point is that, if you're trying to understand the Scottish referendum, then there are at least two prisms we need to look at it through. The first of those is the rise and

fall of the British Empire. That's a process which, to an extent, begins with James VI going south, right after he's forced everyone to sign the Statutes of Iona, which was a conscious part of this process. Then later the Act of Union over 100 years later, which in many ways was about that British elite coming together so they could better conquer the world. Of course, as we all know, they were very, very good at that for a very long time. That empire, from the middle of the twentieth century, has been gradually declining.

If you look at the Scottish referendum through that prism, then it begins to make sense. The British state, when you compare it to any other West European state, isn't really in any sense an average, normal government. Half of the land for which the British state is responsible is in the southern hemisphere. Britain is still responsible for by far the biggest network of tax havens around the world, which are the enclaves of our empire. What we did is turn our empire from a geographical empire into an empire of capital, which still, in a sense, we are located at the centre of, and which is slowly dying and being replaced by America and by China. We could all talk for hours about that story of global history. I think if we're trying to understand the Scottish referendum, then that's the first bit of history to think about. This is one sign of the breaking up of what was once the most mighty empire in the history of humanity.

The second important bit of global context it's worth thinking about is a whole range of frustrations which have bubbled up in hundreds of different ways all across the world since the global financial crisis. We could talk about this, again, for hours. We could talk about Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain. We could talk about the massive rise of workers' struggles, even in China. We could talk about its expression in America in different ways and so on. It's a familiar story.

My job before my current one was training student activists. The way I saw this happening in practice was that, after 2008, what happened, particularly in England, was that there were initiatives like Occupy, the student movements and this flaring up of anger, particularly after the 2010 elections, which then of course dissipated because people had nowhere to channel it. What happened in Scotland was very different because it was right at that moment in 2011 that it became clear there was going to be a referendum and so all that energy went in a different direction. It went into people saying, 'Well, we have the chance to build something new'. These people went off and they organised a whole plethora of campaigns and they expressed themselves in a whole range of different ways. We're talking about, for example, the Radical Independence Conference, which a few months ago got 3,000 radical leftists

together, which is a bigger gathering, comparatively, than you've had in England for that kind of radical politics in a very long time, a bigger gathering than the Labour Party in Scotland could manage, and has been able to manage for a very long time. So I think the second important context for the referendum was as another one of those expressions of the anger that was felt after the 2008 crisis, and of the social movements responding to the austerity and rising inequality that came with it.

I think when you understand the interaction of those two things, the decline of the British Empire up against this massive collapse in global capitalism and the reassertion of its dominance through global austerity, the whole phenomenon makes a lot more sense. It's not surprising that that was a movement able to mobilise 45 per cent of the votes in the end. It's not surprising when you again think about the familiar stories around the change in the media and social media and the internet destroying or very much changing the way people get information, that this is a movement which led to a mass education of people, a huge self-education, a replacement in a sense of much of the old media. We can discuss to what extent that's a good thing. Obviously a lot of these things are very problematic. People believe total nonsense. Often people who, like me, voted yes believe a lot of total nonsense, partly as a result of that. So if the question is: what happened? I think that, to give at least a very partial answer, understanding those two bits of global context is at least a beginning.

In conclusion, I will also say something about the future. At least half of that story about empire was an expression of the failure of the British state to renew itself. We haven't had a serious renewal of the constitution of the British state since mass suffrage in the 1920s. If the British state is to survive, if we're not going to have another referendum – I don't mind having another referendum, but for those who might want to keep it together – it's going to have to utterly renew itself. That means that when Labour are promising a constitutional convention, if there is a Labour government, then they're going to have to have a very serious constitutional convention which really does renew the British state. We're going to have to see a very deep cleansing, an understanding that we are a collection of rocks in the North Atlantic, not a great empire in the world anymore. If we ask ourselves that question and we look at how we should govern ourselves in the modern world in that light, I think we have a chance of Britain running itself in a sensible way. If we don't, I think we're going to see another referendum in the next 20 years or so and Scotland will probably vote yes.

The case for Scottish independence

Ben Jackson, Editor of *Renewal* and Associate Professor of Modern History at Oxford University

The movement of opinion in favour of Scottish independence registered by the referendum now makes it very important to pay close attention to the arguments put forward by Scottish nationalists. Whether you agree with them or not, these arguments are highly sophisticated and designed to subvert key ideas held by the broader progressive British left.

I want to start my analysis by remembering the great Scottish Labour MP, John Mackintosh. On the threshold of the Donald Dewar Room of the Scottish Parliament, some words from Mackintosh are cut into the stone. They read: 'People in Scotland want a degree of government for themselves. It is not beyond the wit of man to devise the institutions to meet these demands' (1). These words were spoken by Mackintosh during the House of Commons debate on the Scotland and Wales Act 1976, and they express the classic case for Scottish devolution as espoused by Mackintosh and indeed Donald Dewar himself: Scots, Mackintosh famously argued, have a dual identity, partly Scottish and partly British, and the political institutions that govern Britain should therefore reflect that dual identity by creating a devolved Scottish parliament to operate within the context of the United Kingdom.

But we should note that Mackintosh's notion of dual identity was more complex than this bald summary suggests. Mackintosh's point was also that at different times one side of Scots' dual identity assumes greater importance than the other. So in the context of the Scottish nationalist surge of the 1970s, Mackintosh observed that the hold of Britishness had been loosened first by the change in Britain's status in the world after 1945 and then by the poor performance of the British economy and government in the late 1960s and 1970s. This left many Scots feeling that the Scottish pole of their dual identity offered a more satisfactory expression of national pride than the British one. Ultimately, Mackintosh argued that a successful British response to the rise of Scottish nationalism would require not just devolution to Scotland but also a period of successful British government, one that would give Scots the feeling that Britain was, as he put it, 'a successful, worthwhile country to belong to for those who do have other places where they can go and other traditions and titles to which they can turn' (1974). I think there is still something to be said for this as a reply to Scottish nationalism, although I want to reformulate slightly Mackintosh's prescription.

Before I get to that, however, I will first sketch in what I take to be the challenge that contemporary Scottish nationalism poses to the project of British social democracy. Over the last thirty years or so, authors such as David Marquand, the late Paul Hirst and Will Hutton have eloquently set out the connection between a programme of British constitutional reform designed to make the British state more democratic and a programme of economic reform designed to make the British economy more stable and socially just. They have persuasively argued that, in order to tackle the pathologies of a short-termist, financialised British capitalism, a more open, pluralist and decentralised British state will have to be created. The creation of a politically durable economic model in which power is shared between labour and capital, and resources pooled more equally between social classes, would in turn require a new British constitution characterised by power-sharing and negotiation rather than classical Westminster majoritarianism (see O'Neill and White, 2014, for a valuable discussion of these ideas).

At one level the challenge that is posed to this argument by the rise of Scottish nationalism is simply to question the assumption that the appropriate political unit for this sort of social democratic project is Britain. But it also runs deeper than that, because the claim of the most articulate exponents of Scottish independence is in essence that, if we take the arguments made by thinkers such as Marquand, Hutton and Hirst seriously, then we ought in fact logically to support Scottish independence. So how exactly do Scottish nationalists seek to recruit these figures to the ranks of the SNP? They do so by drawing on two strands of argument that are indebted to the constitutional reform discourse of the 1980s and 1990s.

First, the Scottish nationalist critique of the British state is broadly similar to the one you find in, say, Marquand's *The Unprincipled Society* (1988), Hutton's *The State We're In* (1996), or the publications of Charter 88. The British state is depicted as in essence pre-democratic and imperial, the product of an idiosyncratic historical path that thwarted a thorough-going bourgeois democratic revolution. Britain is thus an antiquated relic, dominated by the interests of the City of London, and unreformable except by a radical constitutional break, in this case the secession of Scotland. The intellectual provenance of the version of these arguments articulated by Scottish nationalists is more directly indebted to Tom Nairn and Perry Anderson than to Marquand or Hutton, but the argument takes roughly the same shape. The difference is the more pessimistic conclusion of Scottish nationalism, which is that the character of the contemporary British state is so tied to specifically English hierarchies and inequalities that it won't be possible for Scotland or England to achieve a

more democratic and egalitarian settlement while still part of the same political union. A more developmental state can only be created separately by Scotland and then by the rest of the UK, which will, so the argument goes, have been shocked by the secession of Scotland into a fundamental constitutional reappraisal.

Second, the Scottish nationalist understanding of sovereignty adopts a pluralist stance. Scottish nationalists have learned over the years that a claim for undivided Scottish sovereignty is not credible or convincing as an account of what Scottish independence would look like. Rather than making a claim for Scottish autarchy, Scottish nationalists have elaborated a sophisticated account of how an independent Scotland could simultaneously enjoy self-determination in certain respects but in other respects share institutions, laws, and society with foreign nations. For Scottish nationalists, this approach to sovereignty was developed most fully in the writings of the late Neil MacCormick, the legal theorist and SNP MEP, who advanced the case for what he called the 'post-sovereign state'. MacCormick argued that European integration has replaced the absolute sovereignty previously exercised by EU member states with a more pluralistic arrangement in which new rules bind together these states at the European level, removing certain of the powers previously exercised nationally. At the same time, the doctrine of subsidiarity – that decisions should be taken at the lowest possible level – mandates that powers should also be decentralised from the state towards regional authorities or even to newly-created national institutions that break away from existing large multi-national states. On MacCormick's account, the demise of the traditional model of absolute state sovereignty invites Scotland to participate in a new era in which Scottish institutions can take over some important powers previously held at Westminster, while in other domains simultaneously remaining subject to institutions at a European and perhaps even British level. Indeed, part of MacCormick's case was that a British federalism, because of the disproportionate size of England, could never work; it would only be in the context of separate Scottish participation in a European confederal order that equality between England and Scotland could be achieved. So the pluralism is ultimately taken further by Scottish nationalists than would be contemplated in the work of Hirst or Marquand, but they share a withering critique of undivided Westminster sovereignty.

The extent to which Scottish nationalism has made both these themes its own is testament to the sophistication of the current campaign for Scottish independence and the skill with which Scottish nationalists have managed to disorientate their unionist opponents. The argument for Scottish nationalism is now that it is the

logical culmination of the British left's arguments about constitutional and economic reform developed over the last three decades. How might those sympathetic to the creation of a more federal British settlement respond to this colonisation of their arguments? One pragmatic response, which tempted a number of English progressives during the referendum campaign, was to say: well, the Scottish nationalists are right. Serious constitutional reform is frozen at the British level, nothing radical is going to happen, so good luck to Scotland, let them go their own way and see if they can do any better. A second response would go further and say that in fact Scottish independence is not just the least worst option available now, but a positively desirable outcome of the agenda first set out in the 1980s and 1990s by Charter 88 and other constitutional reformers; it would argue that the Scottish nationalist use of the arguments I have discussed is correct.

A third option, of course, would be to resist the Scottish nationalist conclusion by suggesting that a more federal and decentralised British state remains achievable. And this takes us back to John Mackintosh. I noted earlier that Mackintosh's insight was that it was not enough to grant devolution to Scotland, there also had to be something more positive and attractive to say about what Britain stood for; some attempt to activate and amplify the British element of Scots' dual nationality. If this argument against Scottish independence is to succeed, then part of the case will be constitutional; it will rest on creating a more democratic and inclusive British political system, featuring proportional representation, a new second chamber, and so on, as Adam Ramsay has suggested. But I would add that this case cannot just be constitutional; it also has to encompass political economy. Just as, say, *The Unprincipled Society* spelled out the connections between constitutional reform and the reform of Britain's political economy, the revised case for Britain must also have a socio-economic dimension. The best way to meet the case for Scottish independence is to show that a new, pluralist British state can also be a state in which poverty, economic insecurity, and material inequality will all be lower than under our present constitutional order. So in this sense, although there is a lot of discussion about how to renew the case for the union in the wake of the referendum, in fact one important way of capturing the initiative from Scottish nationalism would be for a government in Westminster to undertake serious reform to Britain's economic model. But the chances of such reform do not look terribly bright at present, so it therefore seems that the dual identity of many Scots is likely to continue listing to the Scottish side, and the question of Scottish independence will accordingly be a pressing issue of debate for many years to come.

The great referendum paradox

David Torrance, journalist and author of *Salmond: Against the Odds* (2011) and *Nicola Sturgeon: A Biography* (2015)

Like Gerry Hassan, I'm very interested in the construction of the narratives and stories we tell ourselves in Scotland and the UK. It's quite striking that, since referendum day, an official narrative has emerged from the SNP and the Scottish government that the referendum was this incredible explosion of democratic engagement, this incredible self-education, as Adam Ramsay referred to it, and it was all joyous and uplifting and just brilliant, down to every meeting and debate. That, I'm afraid, is not how I remember it, and I can only offer a personal perspective, as we all do. Elements of it were all of those things, but at the same time it took me about a year into the long referendum campaign to figure out what it reminded me of. It was student politics. It took me straight back to my undergraduate days at Aberdeen and Cardiff Universities. Indeed, some of the debates then were rather more informed.

You had, and this may sound glib, a lot of engagement and debate and discussion masquerading as something it really wasn't. In fact, boiled down, there was an awful lot of fantasy politics. With all due respect to Adam, he touched upon aspects of that fantasy politics agenda. A lot of it was utterly simplistic. There was almost no proper engagement with economic analysis or economic debate, which was reduced to the simplistic level of a yes vote as a vote to end austerity and a no vote as a vote to continue austerity, as if it was that easy. A yes vote will lead to more prosperity, a no vote will condemn us to some sort of terrible future.

Sure, there are arguments on both sides of that, but to frame and conduct the majority of the debate in such simplistic terms was not a good thing by any stretch. It gave rise, at the end of it, to the overwhelming impression in the minds of a lot of people, including some commentators, that there exist easy solutions to deeply difficult problems. In that sense, again, I don't think it was helpful. There was a considerable gap between much of what was posited as a potential outcome from voting for independence and what was realistically achievable. That was a feature throughout much of the campaign, and there was also a gap between that and the official pitch, which, as Ben Jackson has touched upon, was, broadly speaking, a left-wing interpretation of independence.

Yet much of that was merely rhetorical because when you drilled down into the policy detail it looked rather different. The Scottish Government's white paper,

which was that massive illustration of Scottish government policy, appeared in late 2013 – few of us have read the thing cover to cover, and I’m one of them. I have a heavily annotated copy at home, also signed by both Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon, which I must stick on eBay when I fall on hard times. The white paper is actually a pretty orthodox statement of the status quo with some minor tweaks. The central guiding philosophy of the white paper is that growth is the be all and end all, and to achieve growth, taxation, both personal and corporate, has to be roughly where it is at the moment, if not lower, and that once growth has been magically achieved by various means, including cutting corporation tax, we can skim off the proceeds and spend it on nice stuff like welfare, health and being nice to everyone.

The white paper was basically New Labour boiled down. It was not a fundamental break with the political or ideological status quo, but, rhetorically, it was presented as left-wing, as based around tackling inequality. Yet, if you try to find compelling ideas as to how the Scottish Government were going to tackle inequality or promote social justice, there wasn’t very much there. On the welfare state, for example, there were two commissions teed up by Nicola Sturgeon during the referendum campaign. The first one basically described the status quo. The second one concluded that it was all a bit difficult and, looking forward, it would be tough to create a Scandinavian model in Scotland. Very little actually emerged in concrete terms.

Overall, and I don’t say this lightly, I think public discourse was damaged. It wasn’t very strong before the referendum. I think it emerged much weaker. The word ‘bias’ was redefined to mean reading something people didn’t like or agree with. Facts became matters of opinion and were manipulated by both sides. There was a long-running effort during the referendum campaign by one side – it’s easy to figure out which – to delegitimise the UK government. It got to the point where the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom was framed as some sort of alien interloper when he made a speech in the northern part of the country he governs. The media, the particular target being the BBC and BBC Scotland, but also the print media, were delegitimised. The media has many problems already; it’s much, much worse now. Adam touched upon the new media which is replacing it, which ironically is even more blinkered and biased than the old media. The outcome from that is not, as far as I can tell, a good thing. All of this ties into the utter control the SNP has of the political narrative, of the terms of debate.

So strong is that control that the day after the referendum, when Alex Salmond made his well-crafted and movingly delivered resignation speech, he teed up future

aspects of the post-referendum terrain. He set up the Smith Commission, the cross-party devolution commission, to fail before it had even met. He started developing the betrayal narrative, on the basis that, occasionally, in the future, the First Minister of Scotland might have to have a consultative chat with the Secretary of State for Scotland. It rather pales into comparison with oppression and grievance in other international contexts. Nevertheless, it has significant traction because the SNP control the terms of debate. It feeds into much longer-term narratives – and Gerry might say something about this – going all the way back to the 1980s, that Scotland is implicitly anti-Tory, Scotland is more left-wing, Scotland is more egalitarian, Scotland rejected Thatcher, rejected Blair, despite three landslide victories. It's not clear how that rejection manifested itself.

Nevertheless, to a great degree – and Gerry has written about this very well – that is just accepted to be true by large chunks of public opinion and also opinion formers. As we saw again and again, when there were opinion surveys during the referendum, there was a significant gap between those perceptions and what your average Scot actually thinks about all manner of things. Listening to the SNP, you would believe that Scotland is one giant branch of the CND. If you drill down into the data, sure, there's a big chunk of Scots who don't like Trident, but there's a slightly bigger chunk who quite like it being there and don't feel particularly strongly about it being moved. That is not what comes through in public debate.

You therefore have what I call the 'great referendum paradox'. Over the past few years, Scottish public opinion has actually converged with that of the rest of the UK. Scots now think more like people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland than ever before. The Scottish economy has also converged with the rest of the UK, to a great extent, over the past 30 years. Post-war, the Scottish economy lagged behind the rest of the UK, by most measurements. But, paradoxically, at the same time as all of this has been converging, electoral behaviour has been quite starkly diverging. I think there's a good PhD thesis in there somewhere.

The UK government's response is essentially, as it has been for the past 15 years, ad-hoc devolution: 'Here's a bit more power over such and such. Now be quiet and stop banging on about independence'. That strategy, I think, is subject to the law of diminishing returns. Indeed, it is already perfectly clear that there is going to be no electoral or political return on that significant investment from the UK government over the past six months, which echoes the Calman Commission from a few years ago, which echoes other bits of devolution and the original devolution settlement. None of it has had the intended effect. I agree with Adam on this point actually. I

think the only feasible response and the only one that stands any chance of success is a wholesale recasting of the UK. I'm a born-again federalist with all the zeal of a convert. It is of course a minority pursuit, and some might argue a fantastical one. But only that I think – encompassing England, crucially the House of Lords, a written constitution and everything else -- stands a chance of nudging Scottish public opinion back towards the union.

Looking for a new Scotland

Gerry Hassan, Research Fellow at the University of the West of Scotland and author of *Caledonian Dreaming* (2014) and *Independence of the Scottish Mind* (2014)

I agree with nearly every single word David Torrance said, but you might not be surprised that I'm much more optimistic in my take. How I interpreted our subject was to look into where we are now and into the future, so I'm going to just quickly say something about the referendum.

The points David made about the strange paradoxes of Scottish conservatism that is wrapped in a radical conceit and lack of detail are very interesting. When was the last radical left programme in Scotland? I think it was probably the ILP in 1926. In contrast, *The Red Paper on Scotland* (1975), Gordon Brown's great text, doesn't have a single detailed policy proposal in it. When I wrote my book *Caledonian Dreaming* (2014), one of the things that was missing from every single review was that I was trying to explore the ambiguity of the word 'dreaming'. In Scotland, there's a sense of dreaming and then not doing, talking social justice and then not doing it. I explored that in the book. In fact some of the elite narrative lefties, like Ian Bell and so on, they reviewed it, not liking it, but they didn't want to say they didn't like it and thus is Scotland, the echo chamber we live in.

The official yes/no campaigns offered us very, very flawed options. I think the referendum was always really, through the ups and downs, going to end up where it did. The result was a Scottish not-proven verdict, when one side has to argue for change, and the other side, really, in a way, only has to run a default campaign and say: 'Just stick to what we know'. As David said, there were actually several different versions of yes. There was this official, very controlled yes set of messages, and then there was the 'Let a thousand flowers bloom' approach, the explosion that Adam Ramsay mentioned. This seemed to be a case of get your Plasticine out and build your own version of a future Scotland. To the extent that Stephen Noon, the SNP advisor and chief strategist of Yes Scotland actually said at one point, publically:

‘Basically, it’s up to every individual, every person in Scotland to invent/imagine their own version of independence’, which seemed like social democracy as Thatcherism.

The Scottish independence referendum wasn’t just a constitutional moment or a democratic moment. It was about society, power and voice. This is where I’m much more optimistic than David, while still agreeing with nearly all his qualifications. Fintan O’Toole said during the independence referendum campaign: ‘Ask an important question to people and they recognise its importance and people respond with a dignity and see that they have a collective power, a collective power they normally, in modern politics, modern life, basically never experience at other points’. I think that is profoundly right. When the poll came that put yes ahead, you saw that in the way people acted in Scotland. They felt: ‘We’re shaking the British establishment’, and they enjoyed that. It didn’t actually mean they were necessarily going to vote yes, but they enjoyed that unusual moment. I think that might not go away.

Post-independence referendum, we see an attempt to return to business as usual by everyone, really, north of the border: the narrow focus on the constitution, the 39-day Smith Commission. We got a draft Scotland bill suddenly produced, and we have this party political dance, as David noted. The SNP shouting betrayal, voting on English matters, and positioning about English votes for English laws. None of this is going to be, I think, the answer or the solution. None of it is going to find a settled will or be, in Calman’s words, ‘built to last’. That’s because the independence referendum isn’t just about constitutionalism. Why we ended up where we ended up isn’t an accident. It is a product of a changing Scottish society. Scottish society used to be – for all its myths as radical and all that – one of the most ordered, hierarchical, controlled societies in Western Europe, a society where the Church dominated basically. It ruled the land until maybe a century ago, maybe 150 years ago. That authoritarianism, you could feel it in the air of Scotland until the last 30 or 40 years. I think the independence referendum came from that. It was a product of that, and it then acted, through unintended consequences, as a catalyst of further change.

This is again where I’m more optimistic. The unintended consequences of all this stuff is that power and authority are shifting in society. People are not waiting to say, ‘I have to have permission to do a campaign, to have a view’. Indeed, this is part of Scotland becoming a bit like everywhere else in many ways, everywhere else in Western Europe, and in many ways like the rest of the UK. None of this is about

constitutional fine-tuning in terms of public opinion, the obvious desire for economic and social change, the issue of the cul-de-sac of progressive Britain or the failure of Labour Britain, as it is perceived in some of these narratives in Scotland. Again, that's a complicated set of issues, as David said. Labour won three landslide elections north of the border. They may recover in the Westminster elections coming soon. There is this perception about the British state, the gridlock of neo-liberalism and it coalescing around the British political class and state, which has massive truth in it. Then we 'other' that and say: 'We are virtuous. We don't vote Tory. We're progressive despite the fact we have nearly as unequal a distribution of income and wealth as the rest of the UK and as has England'. There is this mismatch between action and words that we don't really talk about.

Just a couple of further observations. If this isn't about narrow constitutionalism, I don't think the answer can come from things like the Smith Commission or repeated Scotland acts and conventions and so on, even British conventions. I don't think it'll come from a federal UK. I think there's little public demand/drive for a federal UK. I also think there's the issue of, in any remaking of the British state, the unexplored area in the last 50 years of the attempt to find a different kind of British state, one that was more developmental, long-term on economic policy and breaking Treasury control, etc. That discussion has been there explicitly from Macmillan, 1961/62, when people moved to France and Italy then and said: 'Ooh, they're very impressive. Can we do things like them?' There was a national plan that was buried with devaluation. Even Labour's first alternative economic strategy in 1974/75, the recent Heseltine report that was binned, basically, side-lined by the government, that set of discussions seems to me to have been side-lined in Britain. How do you remake the constitution with a different kind of state, economically and socially? We are miles away from the possibilities of that in Britain.

The future we are seeing is, not surprisingly, the increasing territorialisation of UK politics. Jim Murphy made the great intervention where he said, 'More Scottish nurses funded by the mansion tax from London.' This brought the reaction from London Labour MPs, particularly, funnily enough, all the ones positioning for the London Labour mayoral post, of saying this was scandalous, Diane Abbott, David Lammy and so on. In a way, they were acting territorially, acting as champions of London. I would say where in any of this is the progressive voice in Scotland, in London and in the rest of the UK?

I just want to conclude with this future observation. There's an assumption north of the border, practically everywhere, that the future is SNP, the future is Nicola. Yet

this Scotland I'm talking about is significantly changing and less controllable than before, whereas the SNP are incredibly centralising and controlling, but rather like New Labour on a good day, without the scandals, the wars and all that. Their version of independence for the last 20 years has been the narrative, the mantra of full powers of the parliament, the sovereign parliament. I don't want to live in a Scotland where the parliament has full powers. I want to live in a Scotland where the parliament has fewer powers. What they're proposing is independence in an ordered, hierarchical society, a new bright version of that, with them, funnily enough, at the centre of it, pulling those very important levers that politicians pull. I think that Scotland is increasingly at odds with that, people now want to be a bit fuzzy, a bit messy. Maybe they're not all going to go and join National Collective or Radical Independence, but they do want to have a different kind of politics and have more responsibility. I think that tension between those two opposing versions of Scotland, which actually the SNP and Labour both represent in different degrees, is going to be one of the real fault-lines in Scottish society and one that I think is at least as important as any form of narrow constitutionalism over the near future.

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Note

1. I am indebted to Walker (2013) for this information.