

PLURINATIONAL SOCIETIES AND CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE. SCOTLAND – SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ASPECTS

Sociedades plurinacionales y cambio constitucional.
Escocia. Aspectos socio-económicos y socio-políticos

Nazio askotako gizarteak eta aldaketa konstituzionala.
Eskozia. Alderdi sozio-ekonomikoa eta sozio-politikoak

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En este trabajo se pretende explicar el contexto socio-económico, cultural y político en que se encuentra en esos momentos Escocia, como fruto de una evolución histórica a través de la cual se ha fraguado como Nación, con unas características propias y distintivas que van evolucionando con el paso del tiempo y los retos de la globalización y de las sociedades modernas y complejas pero que preservan unos rasgos y un mix de valores culturales específico.

Palabras clave: Escocia. Sociología. Economía. Cultura. Política. Nación. Globalización.



Lan honetan, gaur egun Eskoziak bizi duen egoera sozioekonomikoa, kulturala eta politikoa aztertuko dugu. Urteetan bizi izan duen bilakaera historikoak nazio gisa sendotu du Eskozia, eta berezko ezaugarri bereziak aitortu dizkio. Ezaugarri horiek ere bilakaera jasan dute denboraren joanarekin eta globalizazioak eta gizarte moderno zein konplexuek berekin ekarritako erronkekin, baina, dena den, Eskoziak eutsi egin die bere ezaugarri eta balio kultural bereizgarriei.

Giltza hitzak: Eskozia. Soziologia. Ekonomia. Kultura. Politika. Nazioa. Globalizazioa.



This paper intends to set forth the socio-economic, cultural, and political context Scotland finds itself in at the present time, as a result of historic development through which it has forged itself as a Nation, with its own distinctive characteristics which are evolving over time and the challenges of globalization and modern, complex societies yet which preserve some features and a mix of specific cultural values.

Keywords: Scotland. Sociology. Economy. Culture. Politics. Nation. Globalization.

SUMMARY

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I. INTRODUCTION

A large number of the issues of national identity, complex sovereignty and almost permanent constitutional reform are seen these days in the added context of European Union (EU) membership – whether a safety net, an alternative or a loss of national sovereignty. That is a true in the Basque Country as it is in Scotland.

My thoughts reflect the fact that the last 10 years of change in Scotland have run parallel to developments in the EU. Christine O'Neill talks elsewhere to the subject of constitutional change, but it is interesting to observe that Scotland's next political and constitutional «moment» appears to have come in the same month that the Lisbon Treaty finally ratified.

II. SCOTLAND

Many of the same strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that face Scotland today are shared across the continent – including in the Basque Country. The challenges of western Europe, indeed western democracy are generally similar. Our two parts of the world are maritime, relatively peripheral from the EU heartlands – are blessed by much-envied countryside, history and culture but are facing many of the challenges of the outside world:

- Competition for the most skilled workforce;
- Competition for – or replacing the loss of - high value jobs from modern technology and service industries, in the face of intense global competition (of which the EU is only a part, and a potentially diminishing one);

- Maintaining a reputation for education standards – facing the challenge of extending those across the working life-time as training, and of finding a way of remaining competitive at the same time as being affordable;
- Managing the complexity of harnessing a beautiful natural environment, to ensure economic progress, while ensuring any such development is truly sustainable. For example, both Scotland and the Basque Country claim to be the powerhouses of the renewable energy revolution in Europe – whether Scotland’s European Green Energy Centre or the Biscay Marine Energy Platform;
- Competition for R&D expenditure – not just in renewables but life sciences, creative industries and elsewhere;

We are all faced by new external political and economic challenges, some beyond our control, and yet remains a very exciting time in both our domestic political and civic development. So, in terms of Scotland’s own economy and society, where are we now?

III. POLITICAL CONTEXT

Scotland faces the same questions as any devolved political administration – how do we relate to our partners and neighbours (in this case the UK), and how do we split up the money? Any review of the powers of devolution starts at this point– as the Calman Commission has done in Scotland, and the Holtham Commission will do in Wales.

Scotland’s devolved powers are very specific, as Christine O’Neill makes clear. Devolved administration in Scotland is not new, (it is decades old), and there is a long history of «Scottish solutions» to Scottish problems in a UK context. However, that remains within the constraints of a funding formula (the Barnett Formula) that provides a one-off block grant from central government.

Scottish devolution also reminds us that many institutions in Scotland are not new, and indeed many pre-date the creation of the UK itself. That provides for continuity, and singularity, to Scottish affairs that is not always mirrored elsewhere.

Politically, the Scottish Parliament is one of the centre-left. For the mandate of 2007 to 2011, 113 of the 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) would accept that definition, and the political institutions are thereby economically social-democratic, and generally socially liberal. That distinction leads to some key policy differences compared to the rest of the UK.

IV. HEALTH

One of the flagship policies of the first Scottish coalition Government (1999-2003) was the provision of free personal health care for the elderly. It is a policy that is always very highly talked of by former coalition partners and other MSPs and one that political parties have talked of replicating elsewhere in UK, as has been the case with the abolition or reduction of prescription charges.

However, the costs of that care have risen steadily, one recent report suggesting by 11%, and an ageing population and the coming impact of the economic recession will inevitably create big challenges if the policy is to remain in place – at least without some form of means-testing.

One other striking example was the ban on smoking in public places, which was first introduced in Scotland but which has now been matched elsewhere in the UK. Scotland managed to get there first in part due to a confident Government approach and less public opposition (the UK generally was more ambivalent). The UK-wide implementation of the policy would have happened – and did happen - anyway, but the nature of the public debate before and after the implementation has been different. In general, the policy in Scotland is seen as of manifest benefit to one of Europe's unhealthiest societies.

The current Scottish Government has continued to act aggressively against the promotion of cigarettes in shops and under-age sales, and has also tried to do the same on alcohol pricing and promotion. Just as the smoking ban was focused on the responsibility of employers towards their staff in the workplace, alcohol related legislation has been aimed mainly at retailers and their overall social and legal responsibility. However, to date, the alcohol policies have met a much more robust counter-argument from industry (in particular the Scotch Whisky Association and major supermarkets), less political unity and a less convinced public opinion.

While the alcohol pricing issue still shows how a good and well-funded lobbying campaign works, it also shows that unless there is a general, if passive, acceptance of a public health policy, the task of convincing the public may be too great for a minority government. To date, it is also not entirely clear that the opposition to alcohol reduction legislation is purely health-based or is political in part.

V. EDUCATION

One of the other major achievements in the first years of the Scottish Parliament and Executive was the bringing to an end front-line tuition fees for university study. At the time, this created a clear policy gulf between Scotland

and the remainder of the UK, as well as between Scottish students in Scottish universities and those from elsewhere in the UK.

In Scotland, as elsewhere in the UK, the percentage of students attending university or college is higher than ever, in part due to a concerted policy by the UK Labour administration. However, as the competition for staff and research expertise is increasing in more financially straightened times, some institutions are now straining to break away from restrictions on enrolment costs. They are also concerned that diverging policy towards student fees south of the border will leave Scottish tertiary education in a less competitive position. Last but not least, it is also manifestly true that students from the rest of the UK get a worse deal than students from elsewhere in the EU when attending Scottish Universities.

Based as it is on a different historical approach to school structures and examinations, Scottish education in general still seeking to plough a different furrow. There is a different attitude to pre-school and to primary provision, different approach to testing throughout schools years, a separate examination and school inspection authority and a new methodological «Curriculum for Excellence» due to be launched in Scotland that does not relate to the National Curriculum in England and Wales. Nevertheless, it will be interesting to see the impact on all levels of education in Scotland of policies implemented elsewhere in the UK after the 2010 General Election.

VI. OTHER POLICY AREAS

Other policies, like Agriculture and Fisheries have always been pursued differently across the UK, for geographic and economic reasons, as well as political and historical ones. For example, fisheries still holds a disproportionate influence in Scottish politics as relates to the European Union, considering the amount of people directly employed. A majority of the UK's fisheries industry is situated in Scotland, and as a result, in the last European Parliament mandate, 4 out of the then 7 Scottish MEPs sat on the PECH (Fisheries) committee.

In some cases, this divergence of policy can be of direct benefit. The «Foot and mouth» outbreak in the UK in 2001 was generally viewed to have been handled better in Scotland than elsewhere as all the key agencies involved were smaller and closer to hand for ministers. However, to recognise that these policy areas are important to Scotland is also to recognise that policy making at EU level in those same areas is still formally a UK responsibility.

Scottish Ministers may dissent from the UK negotiating line, and they have done both before and after Council of Ministers meetings in the past. But they

do not – and will not – be provided with the opportunity to do so inside Council meetings, as only one UK voice will be heard (even if the Minister involved happens to be a Scottish Minister representing the entire UK). In truth, when it comes to EU matters, even when the governments in Edinburgh and London are of a different political persuasion, there is rarely a substantial public disagreement over direction as far as the main EU areas of competence are concerned.

VII. ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Someone who visited the central belt of Scotland in the late 1980's to late 1990's, might be amazed today to see the speed at which Scotland has moved away from electronics as a major contributor to the country's inward investment profile. Just as heavy primary industries, which had defined 20th century Scotland, all but disappeared in a decade, so the electronic assembly and design industry gave way to an economy dominated by services, in particular financial services, tourism and other aspects of customer care.

Recent events have, unsurprisingly, hit Scotland harder than most given the predominance and history of its banking sector. The Bank of Scotland, established in 1695, is now effectively in government hands, as is the Royal Bank of Scotland – until recently an aggressive and acquisitive force in global banking. Nevertheless, Edinburgh, and to a lesser extent Glasgow, still remain substantial hubs for personal banking, insurance and in particular, asset management.

It has, however, been very interesting to watch the impact that the banking crisis has had on the Scottish political debate, leading to many questions as to whether an independent Scotland and separate banking system would have been able to survive, given the scale of the UK Government «bail-out». The question is probably impossible to answer, much as it is too early to say whether Iceland has «survived» or not.

Nevertheless, some of the limitations of a minority party in a devolved government have been illustrated, with the Scottish Government's ability to act and respond in such a period of crisis significantly limited by resources and legislative powers, even given the general air of confidence that the current Scottish administration exudes. The crisis has allowed Ministers in Westminster to re-emphasise their macro role in Scottish political life, and has also reinforced the sense that there are substantial and key decisions that are still made elsewhere.

Indeed, the banking crisis may yet prove to be the most important aspect of Scottish political change in recent years, throwing up a series of interesting and open questions:

- Is entry into the more or less likely now?
- Does the world feel a bigger and colder place, viewed from the north-west periphery of Europe?
- Has the crisis brought home the full implications of globalisation?
- Does the crisis question long-standing and respected traditions (and stereotypes) – not least Scottish «caution» with finances – domestic or commercial?
- Or has it shown that fiscal and monetary controls need to be held as close to home as possible?

VIII. THE ENERGY ECONOMY

Renewable energy has already been touched upon and it provides another interesting example of changes which are, at least in part, the result of the coincidence in timing between devolution and the growth of alternative forms of energy.

The current Scottish Government has seized upon renewable targets for Scotland as a means of distinguishing the country in international eyes. Scotland already produces 25 per cent of Europe's tidal power and 10 per cent of Europe's wave power, and has a baseline target of producing 50% of all energy from renewable sources by 2020. It has established a European Green Energy Centre, with the aim of making the Northern Isles of Scotland a focus for development activities in the field. The Government has also established a «Saltire Prize» of £10 million to encourage commercial development of innovations in wave and tidal energy. To date however, the full commercialisation of marine power in Scotland has yet to materialise.

Nevertheless, the economy of Scotland still feels the huge impact of North Sea Oil in terms of exploration, refining and support services. Oil revenues were a traditional source of argument for Scottish nationalists, who sought the allocation to Scotland of the majority, or entirety, or revenues gathered in the UK from North Sea Oil production. The nature of the settlement between Scotland and the UK still requires co-operation between the UK government responsible for gathering revenue and the Scottish government responsible for investing in business development and growth.

The government also wishes to see Scotland playing a leading role in the development of carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology – but large scale projects have still failed to attract appropriate funding, and the story remains one of potential as yet unrealised.

Planning issues relating to energy have played a large part in post-devolution politics. While attractive for economic, geographic and meteorological reasons, the development on onshore wind farms remains as contentious in Scotland as anywhere. Equally, the national grid is still insufficiently connected to the renewable energy rich peripheries of Scotland, so big questions remain over the development of inter-connections with the rest of the UK and Europe, as well as a large a controversial planning inquiry at present over «super» pylons through the Highlands.

The Scottish Government has been adamant that Scotland's substantial dependence on nuclear power is not desirable in 21st century Scotland. While the UK Government has begun a change in direction from its previously anti-nuclear policy, the devolved administration has used its responsibility for planning law to refuse renewal or replacement of nuclear sites, citing the lack of a reliable proposition on storage of nuclear waste and what are perceived to be very substantial and also open-ended costs for this and future generations.

In theory, it would be possible for this or any future UK government to over-rule the Scottish Government's decision, but it has become clear in recent announcements that the existence of a Scottish consensus has been recognised.

Overall, the development of energy projects in Scotland has been strongly reliant on the public sector, EU and domestic energy companies for investment and impetus, but recently companies such as Vattenfall, Iberdrola and Energia do Portugal have been buying into Scottish market as developers, producers and distributors.

IX. A EUROPEAN ECONOMY?

As mentioned above, it is service industries – leisure to call-centres to catering – that have provided the greatest Scotland-wide growth in recent years, as elsewhere in the UK, with Scotland's strong tourism image keeping them sustained.

This predominance does lead to one particular observation – that the accession of the EU «A8» (the 10 states that joined in 2004, minus the Commonwealth members Cyprus and Malta) was probably welcomed in Scotland more than any other constituent part of UK, something that still holds true today. This has been less the case for the subsequent «A2» of Romania and Bulgaria, and social attitudes may be hardening (see below) but the huge influx of Poles and Baltic State nationals after 2004 – the largest in recent Scottish history - did help support a belief in Scottish political and business life that being part of a common market was a natural and advantageous thing.

That subtle difference may have substantial implications for how the UK as a body perceives the EU, a less pro-European UK governments will not always find a consensus for their approach across the nations and regions of the Kingdom. A new UK government by June 2010 may yet change that impression, but to a certain extent, the passing of the Lisbon Treaty has removed the opportunity for any administration to define itself in an argument over ratification.

Had such an argument come to pass, it has never been clear at all that Scotland would support EU renegotiation withdrawal or the permanent rejection of Euro membership. One need only look at the still lamentable polling figures in Scotland for the otherwise successful United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) to find a different centre point in the political status quo.

Should an incoming UK government in 2010 seek a departure from the EU's social chapter, as the UK Conservatives have indicated, there may yet be an area of core divergence within the UK administrations. The same could be said of a further retreat on Justice and Home Affairs co-operation. Scotland, through its own code of law might well not agree with such a move, indeed one could argue that it has already seen the substantial loss of negotiating rights in this wholly devolved area, with the UK «red lines» in the Lisbon Treaty taking no notice of the opinion of Scots law.

This issue ties in with one of the most interesting, if relatively small scale, changes in the Scottish international approach – the «Fresh Talent» initiative.

The previous Scottish administration negotiated with the UK Home Office to be allowed to keep overseas non-EU graduates in Scotland on work permits, with the additional aim attracting others. The project had mixed success, not least in its ongoing negotiations with the Home Office, but the fact that the UK government countenanced a devolved policy in a reserved area says something in itself.

Such attempts would probably have less success had the same Party not been at least in a share of power north and south of the Border. To try and develop such a proposal between different administrations would require real, formal and transparent structures and agreements, and open channels – a real challenge for all pluri-national states.

X. A LESS BRITISH SOCIETY?

Nevertheless, the Fresh Talent project allowed the Scottish Government of the time to begin to change the nature of the devolved debate. By seeking to have the UK recognise the benefit of loosening the established political system slightly, the devolved administration was also trying to make the case that a stronger and

better equipped Scottish economy would reduce some of the arguments about the «over-subsidy» of Scotland (and other parts of the UK) that grow by the day in certain parts of the mainly London-based media and political community.

Further progress in such a policy of actively welcoming EU and non-EU nationals would also have drawn glances from elsewhere in the EU, the «re-branding» aspects of the policy not lost on the administration of the time. It would be, and was, possible to say that such a policy was reflective of a wider difference in attitude – the idea that the «little Englander» whose home is his castle does not, for whatever reason, hold such potency in Scotland.

It is certainly true that the Scottish Saltire (St Andrews Cross) does not have the same potentially negative image or potency that the Cross of St George has held (with all due apologies to Catalans and others) – although mainstream Parties in England, along with football supporters, are trying to redress that. Until relatively recently, the hard-right British National Party (BNP) was getting as little traction politically in Scotland as UKIP does.

In fact, the BNP's recent UK success in European elections was due in part to uncertainty on behalf of political parties and media about how to deal with them, whether to challenge and contest, or ignore and isolate. However, the BNP's success story was as much the story of a collapse in the Labour vote. It was clear though that in time of recession their message began to carry beyond traditional supporters, and for first time carried to Scotland in numbers – but again only when other parties barely took part in campaigning against them.

In relation to such politics, Scotland has had the rare historical «advantage» of being relatively large and relatively empty. Even despite recent changes, the black and ethnic minority representation in Scottish society is very low, and the most recent EU immigrants have not, at least on first impression, provided much visible sense of change.

All that having been said – one thing that has not changed at all in Scotland, with or without devolution, is an almost medieval obsession with religion, or at least the inherited and interpreted symbols of it. One of the less welcome blessings of having been first one of the special daughters of the Roman Catholic Church, then the hotbed of the Presbyterian Reformation, is that historic divisions are kept well alive.

The powerful «Old Firm» rivalry of Celtic FC and Glasgow Rangers is simply the most recent interpretation of old problems between Irish immigrants and Scottish locals, which in itself was a re-importation of Ulster v Irish nationalism created by the transplanting of Sots Protestant farmers in Ulster 300 years ago.

In truth, the arguments about sectarianism and the rather monotonous shouting match about long-forgotten battles and creeds that are such a strong

and unique aspect of Scottish popular culture ones are not borne out by Church attendance – on either side. The Catholic Church is strong, as in large parts of the western UK, and has for several decades been represented at Cardinal level again – indeed the new Pope will probably visit soon. But Scotland is still a nation in large part defined by it's the national, but not Established, Church of Scotland, by its Presbyterianism and by the ironically sinful pleasure many derive from self-denial, caution and collective pessimism.

Talking of collective pessimism, this is a good point at which to mention sport... Sport has always, like law, banking, education and the Church – helped keep alive a post-1707 sense of otherness from other parts of the UK. It is a combination of factors that Wales, for example, despite the health of its distinct language, cannot match.

Scotland can, and does, pride itself in being the only «legislative region» with its own football and rugby team. Football in particular operates in entirely separate leagues – and different climactic conditions. However, any changes that have happened to the big national sports have been incidental to politics and not driven by any particular process in devolution – professionalism in rugby and commercialism in football – although, as ever in sport, politicians are always keen to be involved.

That said, there is no doubt that having an exclusively Scottish political class did help in lobbying for events that would perhaps never have crossed the mind or the desk of the Secretary of State for Scotland of old. In 2014, Scotland will host the Ryder Cup of golf for the first time (as for Wales in 2010). For the first time, Scotland bid to host a major football championship - Euro 2008 - and at least contemplated doing so again for 2012, albeit with little success. Scotland has, for the first time, also contemplated bidding for the Rugby World Cup.

Meanwhile the Commonwealth Games will be coming to Glasgow in 2014 following a bid launched by one First Minister and secured by his successor. Both the Scottish and UK governments were keen to support the bid which also helped neuter some of the objections to UK funding for the London 2012 Olympic Games. Those objections are part of an overall economic debate about different social needs across the UK and a little-understood funding mechanism that seeks to iron out national and regional disparities.

XI. THE CULTURAL ECONOMY

Misunderstanding about funding support within the UK is also fuelled by another consequence of devolution – namely substantial changes in the media. Again, like sport, larger structural changes have largely been the result of ex-

ternal factors, with Scottish print newspapers losing readership and advertising revenue as is happening almost everywhere else. It is the case today that the two «regional» broadsheet newspapers serving the Aberdeen and Dundee areas respectively sell more copies than the two «national» titles that emanate from Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Challenging all the traditional Scottish print media are Rupert Murdoch's News International UK titles – *The Sun* and *The Times* – both of which now print specifically Scottish editions. These titles enjoy the breadth of the UK equivalents' journalism and advertising power, with the ability to choose editorial stances that often differ from their sister papers elsewhere in the UK. There are now Scottish editions of other UK broadsheet and tabloid newspapers, all of which recognise and report devolution and the different political culture.

The inevitable flip side of this state of affairs is less coverage of Scotland in the UK-wide media overall, with the possible exception of the BBC, (which tries as best it can to keep its traditional commitment both to Britishness and to the Nations and Regions that make up the UK). This general divergence or reporting priorities, matched by distinctive political cultures in Wales, Northern Ireland and now London, means that there is less awareness of the political, social and economic changes that have taken place across the UK, less understanding of the pressures that bear north and south of the Border, and as such a greater assumption in England that Scots want «out» or in Scotland that English or UK government objections to further change are all self-serving and based in an imperial mentality.

At the same time, newspapers and broadcasters have also drawn home resources from covering the EU in Brussels to deal with the new political arrangement at home – unfortunately just at the time that a devolved Scotland is beginning to be more vocal about the changes it would like to see in EU policies that matter the most. It is worth noting that the annual «Politician of the Year» award in Scotland is always selected exclusively from the ranks of the Scottish or UK parliaments – never from the level above or the level below. Despite this inevitable introversion, at least the Scottish people have had to be taught about their new level of government and what it does, and doesn't, do and how it compares with those that still exist at national, and to some extent local and European levels. It is by no means certain that the same level of re-education has taken place in those parts of England unaffected by any recent form of devolution.

The current Scottish Government has commissioned a special study into broadcasting provision in Scotland that will report in due course. There is also a new Gaelic digital television channel, which reflects the strong political support for the language, but reminds us all that language has none of the inextricable

links with national identity in Scotland as it does in Wales or in the Basque Country.

Changes may come in Scottish broadcasting, but it is most likely in print media that a crisis may develop that might lead to some kind of specific Scottish political action, given the pressures on the print media mentioned above. Such a crisis has been avoided, for now, by the Scottish commercial television channel STV, which is re-positioning itself from national commercial channel to regionally specific commissioning company.

The same readjustment can be seen in other creative industries. Individual sectors may carry on as before, but there has been an almost endless of the restructuring of bodies responsible for cultural support – such as the Scottish Arts Council - since the Scottish Parliament was created, and the process is not over yet.

On the other hand, devolution has also allowed for the redeployment of existing resources into new developments such as a long overlooked National Theatre of Scotland, which has no permanent concrete home but is more of a travelling company, experiencing considerable early success.

XII. CONCLUSION – CHANGES, WHAT CHANGES?

It is manifestly clear that the process of devolution, even the existence alone of a Scottish Parliament alone as a centre for debate, has changed the economic and social directions of Scotland – and not always in the ways originally intended. It is equally true that the levers that devolution put in the hands of Scottish Ministers may, in some cases, have simply been quicker and easier to pull than was possible at a UK level, resulting in policy-making in consecutive stages, rather than divergent or simultaneous in two different capitals.

What remains less clear, 10 years since the Scottish Parliament opened, is whether that level change is sufficient, or indeed sustainable. Given the variety of multi-level political democracies in Europe and elsewhere today, the question remains whether anyone can genuinely agree which powers regions, nations, or states need to manage themselves and to compete in a single market. Is it possible, in those communities where full independence is not the common will, to secure reasonable autonomy while maintaining functioning cohesion between themselves and other constituent parts?

In all of this, the central question, in the minds of taxpayers if not politicians, will be how fair and coherent is any system of redistribution within that arrangement? The discussion of own resource funding for the EU (such as an EU tax), on the back of the EU budget agreement, mirrors the debate in Scotland

at the moment for many of the same reasons - whether Parliament's power to spend money should be matched with the responsibility at a Scottish, rather than British, level, to raise the money they need (an argument equally familiar in San Sebastian-Donostia).

It brings one back once again to the principle of subsidiarity – is everything being done at the right level? If such a principle matters enough to be written into the European Treaties in the first place, then it must apply, to one extent or another, in each of the states that signed that Treaty – not least the United Kingdom. At least within the UK and Scotland, that principle is now enshrined, through the Scotland Act and others in the political, social and economic life of the nation.

As a result, Scotland arguably has a better arrangement than many other «legislative regions» when comparing its relationship with Brussels to its relationship with the state's capital. That may be one sign that we are able and honest enough now to admit that we cannot do everything on our own, nor can everything be done to us by proxy. It may mean that we may not always want to have our own solutions, or that – even between ourselves – that we won't always agree.

At least for once, in constitutional terms, someone has actually written it down. At that in itself is quite a change for us.