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Scotland

The social movement for independence and the crisis of the British state

- Features -

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The British state and its party structures are in crisis. What new forms of political expressions has the Scottish referendum brought into play? This article examines the social and political forces behind 2014.

If, in 2011, you had asked members of the radical left to identify a sequence of events that might lead to a crisis of the British state, most would have probably nominated a combination and escalation of the struggles then current: public sector strikes in defence of services and pay, riots in communities subject to police violence, and student demonstrations against tuition fees, perhaps set against the backdrop of opposition to yet another imperialist war in the Middle East. A referendum on Scottish independence is unlikely to have featured high on the list.

Yet within three years such a referendum had momentarily rendered the actual end of the British state a realistic prospect and, for two weeks in September, the campaign for a Yes vote had reduced the British ruling class to a panic unparalleled since the early stages of the Miner's Strike of 1984-5 and, in terms of public visibility, since the industrial struggles of the early 1970s.

Obviously this was contrary to the pieties of the Approved Left Strategies Playbook. According to conventional wisdom, a referendum would at best only encourage constitutional illusions, at worst lead to national divisions among the British working class. Typical exponents of this type of thinking were representatives of the Red Paper Collective, a reformist think-tank uniting trade union officials and Labour-supporting academics, who asked for 'a better use of the labour movement's time and resources than signing up to be foot-soldiers in one or other of the bourgeois campaigns currently vying for attention.' [1] The suggestion that abstention was the appropriate response is rather disingenuous, since everyone associated with this group opposed Scottish independence and supported the continuing unity of the British state. [2] But even leaving that aside, the approach was in any case totally misguided.

In a capitalist society, all politics is by definition 'bourgeois' unless working-class interests are forced onto the agendas which would otherwise exclude them. Some areas of political life are obviously more susceptible to working-class intervention than others, and some will always have greater priority, but none can be dismissed as entirely irrelevant. As the late Daniel Bensaïd wrote, in his attempt to capture the essence of Leninism:

If one of the outlets is blocked with particular care, then the contagion will find another, sometimes the most unexpected. That is why we cannot know which spark will ignite the fire.

In this conception, which I endorse, the watchword is: "Be ready!" Ready for the improbable, for the unexpected, for what happens.' [3] Improbable as it may at first appear, the Scottish independence referendum became one of Bensaïd's 'outlets'.

Metropolitan fantasies and Scottish realities

Anyone who relied on commentaries by the Labour-supporting metropolitan liberal-left to understand events in Scotland might well be puzzled by this conclusion. For, whether out of conscious dishonesty or simply catastrophic levels of ignorance, the inhabitants of this milieu chose to portray the Yes campaign as an essentially ethnic movement. John McTernan, a former Labour Special Adviser, wrote on the day of the referendum:

Populism is sweeping Europe, and the UK is not immune. The SNP surge is part of this phenomenon. The characteristics are putting the nation and its needs and aspirations above other calls on solidarity.

I pause only to draw attention to the fact that this call for solidarity was being issued in the pages of The Daily Mail, before noting McTernan's claim that there is a 'clear populism of the Centre-Right–UKIP and the SNP in the UK.' Phillip Stephens of the Financial Times wrote that Salmond 'has reawakened the allegiance of the tribe', before also comparing the SNP with the racist xenophobes of UKIP: 'Mr Salmond is to Scotland what Nigel Farage, the leader of the UK Independence party, is to England.' [4] The Observer's Will Hutton saw Scottish independence as heralding the Decline of Western Civilization:

If Britain can't find a way of sticking together, it is the death of the liberal enlightenment before the atavistic forces of nationalism and ethnicity—a dark omen for the 21st century. Britain will cease as an idea. We will all be diminished. [5]

Scottish novelist C. J. Sansom at least allowed that the intentions of Yes supporters were commendable:

Some, certainly, will be thinking about voting yes on Thursday, not from nationalism, but in the hope of social change. Yet they will not get it, because, like it or not, they are voting for a nationalist outcome. ... And the SNP, who will be victors and negotiators of Scotland's future, are not socialist, but classic populists who over the years have swithered around the political spectrum to gain votes for nationalism. [6]

But those who do not wish to talk about British nationalism should also remain silent about Scottish nationalism. Michael Keating points out, in a comment that might have been written with these commentators in mind: 'Some of those who condemn minority nationalism as necessarily backward frame this as a condemnation of all nationalism, ignoring the implicit nationalism underlying their own position and confusing their own Metropolitan chauvinism with a cosmopolitan outlook.' [7]

In fact, for most Yes campaigners the movement was not primarily about supporting the SNP, but nor was it even about Scottish nationalism in a wider sense. 'For me', writes Billy Bragg, 'the most frustrating aspect of the debate on Scottish independence has been the failure of the English left to recognise that there is more than one kind of nationalism.' [8] Bragg's support was welcome, particularly in the pages of The Guardian, which in most respects played an abysmal role during the referendum campaign, but these comments confuse the issue. As a political ideology, nationalism—any nationalism, relatively progressive or absolutely reactionary—involves two inescapable principles: that the national group should have its own state, regardless of the social consequences; and that what unites the national group is more significant than what divides it, above all the class divide. Neither of these principles was dominant in the Yes campaign. One right-wing, but relatively level-headed No supporter observed:

Those out canvassing don't report encountering more blood-and-soil types than before. Instead, they say that what is driving people is a variant of the anti-politics mood that is roiling politics across the UK. [9]

More precisely, Yes campaigners saw establishing a Scottish state, not as an eternal goal to be pursued in all circumstances, but as one which offered better opportunities for equality and social justice in our current condition of neoliberal austerity—in other words as a way of conducting the class struggle, not denying its existence. Writing in New Left Review in 1977, Tom Nairn said:

The fact is that neo-nationalism has become the gravedigger of the old state in Britain, and as such the principal factor making for a political revolution of some sort in England as well as the small countries. Yet because this process assumes an unexpected form, many on the metropolitan left solemnly write it down as a betrayal of the revolution. ... The essential unity of the UK must be maintained till the working classes of all Britain are ready. [10]

Nairn is often regarded as simply being premature in his assessment, and his point about the 'unexpected form' of the threat to the British state is certainly relevant; but nevertheless 'neo-nationalism' is not the gravedigger, for reasons well expressed by the Irish writer Fintan O'Toole:

The Scottish referendum is...a symptom of a much broader loss of faith in the ability of existing institutions of governance to protect people against unaccountable power. This why the campaign is not particularly nationalistic... The demand for independence just happens, for historical reasons, to be the form in which Scots are expressing a need that is felt around the developed world, the urgent necessity of a new politics of democratic accountability. [11]

Independence has therefore become the demand of socialists, environmentalists and feminists. The sections of the Scottish radical left who actively supported a Yes vote—the overwhelming majority, bar some fossilised sectarians—were therefore right to throw themselves into the campaign and, in doing so, took part in one of the greatest explosions of working class self-activity and political creativity in Scottish history, far greater in depth and breadth than those around the Make Poverty History/G8 Alternatives mobilisations in 2005, the Stop the War Coalition in 2002-3 or even the Anti-Poll Tax campaign on 1987-90. The level of participation and relative closeness of the outcome, for which the left can claim much of the credit, are two measure of this. Yet when the campaign began, early in 2012, there was no indication that it would take this form.

Shadow plays, double-bluffs, miscalculations

From 2000 onwards the SNP included in its electoral manifestos a commitment to carry out a referendum on independence, if it achieved a majority in the Scottish Parliament. Once that majority was achieved in May 2011 a referendum of some sort was inevitable. Under the Scotland Act (1998) all constitutional issues relating to the 1707 Treaty of Union between England and Scotland are reserved to Westminster. The question was therefore whether the referendum would be an 'unofficial' one conducted by the Scottish Government (similar to one scheduled to be held in Catalonia on 9 November), or one in which the process was legitimated and the result consequently recognised by the UK government. Prime Minister and Conservative leader David Cameron took the initiative on 8 January 2012 by announcing that Westminster would legislate for a referendum to be held, but there were conditions; above all, there would only be one question. In other words, there would not be an option to vote for Maximum Devolution, or 'devo max', as it has come to be known.

Devo max was the option overwhelmingly supported by most Scots, perhaps as many as 71%, at this point. Although there are different conceptions of what exactly this might involve, the most complete version would have left the Scottish Parliament in control of all state functions (including taxation) with the exception of those controlled by the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Bank of England. The bulk of the SNP leadership recognised that there was not—or at any rate, not yet—a majority for independence. Devo max was therefore what the SNP hoped to achieve—and more importantly, what they thought they could achieve—in the short-to medium-term. Scottish First Minister and SNP leader Alex Salmond would therefore have preferred devo max to be included on the ballot paper, since he would have been able to claim victory if the result was either independence (unlikely) or devo max (most probable).

Cameron refused to play ball. His reason for insisting on a stark alternative between the status quo and independence was simple enough: he wanted to decisively defeat the latter, if not for all time, then at least for the foreseeable future, without allowing voters an opt-out. The risks involved seemed small—he was as familiar with polls showing minority support for independence as Salmond, after all. We should not imagine, however, that Cameron was therefore opposed to devo max. On the contrary, in a speech in Edinburgh on 16 February he offered further measures of devolution if voters rejected independence. For tactical reasons Salmond affected to believe this was a

ruse to lull the Scots into voting for the status quo, after which the promise would be quietly forgotten; but while there are historical precedents for doubting the veracity of Conservative promises, in this case I believe they were perfectly genuine, for reasons which, as we shall see, have now acquired urgent political importance. Cameron was however prepared to pay a high price for a one-question referendum. He eventually conceded to the SNP leader his demands for the enfranchisement of 16-and 17-year olds, the right to decide on the date and the nature of the question, thus enabling Salmond to frame it as a positive (unlike, 'should Scotland remain part of the UK?', for example) and campaign for an upbeat Yes rather than a recalcitrant No. These were all confirmed by the Edinburgh Agreement, signed by Cameron and Salmond for their respective governments, at St Andrews House on 15 October 2012.

Even though devo max was absent from the ballot paper, the version of independence promoted by the SNP closely resembled it, retaining as it did the Monarchy, membership of NATO and the pound through a currency union with the Rest of the UK (RUK). The intention here was clearly to make the prospect of independence as palatable as possible to the unconvinced through the continued presence of these institutions, so that independence involved the fewest changes to the established order, compatible with actual secession. However, as became clear during the campaign, most Scots voting for Yes wanted their country to be as different from the contemporary UK as possible, so this approach hampered the official Yes campaign from the start. Moreover, the issue of the currency placed a weapon in the hands of the No campaign which they were to use remorselessly until the very end.

The official Yes campaign, 'Yes Scotland' was launched on 25 May, and was unsurprisingly dominated by the SNP with, in supporting roles, the Scottish Green Party and the Scottish Socialist Party. Its rival, 'Better Together' followed on 25 June, uniting the Scottish Tories, the Scottish Liberal Democrats and the Scottish Labour Party—the latter providing both the campaign's front man in the shape of former Chancellor Alasdair Darling and the bulk of its activists on the ground. Early in the campaign some Labour activists attempted to nullify their embarrassment at being in league with the Conservative enemy by pretending that the entire business was simply a tiresome distraction involving equivalent cross-class alliances on both sides. Pauline Bryan of Labour Campaign for Socialism and the Red Paper Collective wrote:

In Scotland we can see that the SNP and particularly the Yes campaign are a broad alliance across the political spectrum, and the referendum has resulted in the better together campaign which has the support of the Tories, Lib Dems and Scottish Labour. It takes the politics out of politics. [\[12\]](#)

This is simply an evasion. The most obvious difference between the two sides can be seen if we list those forces which stood behind the No campaign: the supposedly neutral institutions of the British state, in particular the Treasury and the BBC; most British capitalists; UKIP and the British National Party; the Orange Order; the entire press with the sole exception of the Glasgow Sunday Herald (and the more right-wing—i.e. the Express and the Mail—they were the more rabidly Unionist they also tended to be); the President of the USA and his likely Democrat successor; the Commission of the EU; and the rulers of all nation-states with insurgent minority national movements. In short, behind the three Unionist parties stood the representatives and spokespersons of the British and international capitalist class, supporters of the current imperial ordering of the world system, and reactionaries and fascists of every description. Finding oneself in this company, anyone on the left might reasonably ask themselves whether it was conceivable that these people and organisations could all have misunderstood their own class interests, which, one assumes, do not include preserving the unity of the British labour movement.

The Yes campaign as a social movement

To understand the nature of the Yes campaign as it developed, especially in the last 6 months, it is instructive to compare with the two previous referendums on Scotland's constitutional position. Monitors in 1979 reported 'no activity; no cars to polls; no literature; really pathetic. ... Political activity during the referendum campaign was

significantly absent.’ Similar reports were made in 1997: ‘Apart from the media you would not have known there was a referendum. ... The campaign was almost non-existent. No opposing campaign at all was evident.’ [13] Now contrast these dismal scenarios with the following picture, drawn by Scottish journalist Paul Hutcheon in 2014:

Rather than consisting of activists manning jumble sales, the Yes movement was on its way to creating the 300 local community groups, 50 sectoral organisations and dozens of other spin-offs that would flood the country with pro-independence activity. Tens of thousands of people across the country were now involved: from self-generated local Yes groups, to National Collective and the left-wing Radical Independence Campaign (RIC); from individuals manning Yes cafes, to new recruits running drop in centres. Yes staffers knew the grass-roots campaign was working when they learned of large community debates they had not organised, run by local groups they did not know existed. Yes Scotland was now almost redundant – it had become a ‘central services’ resource for groups, providing literature, merchandise and email updates. By May 30 this year, the formal starting point of the referendum campaign, Yes was the biggest grass-roots political movement Scotland had seen.

Hutcheon writes of ‘two campaigns’, one traditional and led by the suits, arguing in conventional media set piece debates, the other a ‘ground war’, ‘one-to-one’, door-to-door, intentionally bypassing the media’. [14] It was this ‘other’ campaign, which drew in the previously marginalised housing schemes. In his research into the so-called ‘missing million’ of Scots who either unregistered or choose not to vote, Willie Sullivan points out that their reasons are not those they are commonly assumed to be:

One key point...is that they are not apathetic about where they live, or about the desire for it to be better. Any suggestion that non-voters are uninterested and broadly disengaged beyond voting was not borne out by the research.

On the contrary, they had perfectly rational reasons for political disengagement: ‘Participants recognised that they have a choice in voting, but options arising through voting are set by others who are unlike them, and none of those options are felt to make much sense.’ [15]

Much of the credit for beginning the process of involving these Scots must go to the Radical Independence Movement (RIC). Starting as a conference in November 2012 attended by 800 people, it had grown by the following year’s event to 1,200 and it was from this point that it began to operate as an actual part of the campaign, rather than simply as a forum for discussion. Essentially a united front, involving members of the existing left parties (including the Scottish Greens) and the left-wing of the SNP, it helped initiate one of the most important aspects of the overall campaign—the voter registration drives in working-class communities. Two founder members described part of the operation in RS21:

The mass canvass took place in over 40 localities. We are now reaching into all major settlements in Scotland. But because we recognised that the poorest, most densely populated communities must bear the most votes and the most ready support for a decisive political and social change, we canvassed these areas the hardest. RIC is also concerned with a scheme for voter registration and for the recording areas of greatest Yes support—for remobilisation closer to the vote. We recognised early that those voters who would buck the polling trend would be those voters who don’t talk to pollsters and hate politicians; those voters who have told our activists: ‘You are the only people to ever ask me what I think about politics.’ [16]

It would be wrong to credit RIC with all activities of this type—in the north and west of Edinburgh, for example, groups like Craigmillar Yes also conducted mass registration and canvassing drives, but it gave the campaign an initial push toward the left, not least by articulating what socialist demands might be achieved by independence. But initiative and creativity also emerged independently of any organised group and in the most unlikely places. Yes supporter Lesley Riddoch gives the example of a woman from the village of Farr near Inverness who came to one of her meetings in

Aberdeen. [Note to non-Scots: this involves a round trip of 225 miles.]

She went home and chatted to another mum as they watched their children at the playground. Neither had organised a political event before but they enlisted like-minded friends to produce hundreds of posters, laminate and nail them onto every road junction within a 10-mile radius of the village hall, and replace them up to four times to cope with rain and naysayers. On the night, the women organised a PA system, got badges, stickers and books, produced food and drink...and opened the night with a fabulous, local all-women band. Around 250 people packed into Farr's tiny remote hall and the ensuing talk and discussion lasted almost four hours. [17]

Even unionist opinion-makers in the London press felt obliged to report the packed public meetings, the debates in pubs and on street corners, the animation of civic life. [18] One comparison for the mood in Scotland as Referendum Day drew near might be with General Election night on 2 May 1997. Kenyon Wright recalled the atmosphere in Edinburgh after the New Labour victory:

The city seemed alive with new hope. The sun shone: birds sang in the flowering cherry trees in the gardens; above all every face seemed to wear a smile that conveyed a mixture of relief, surprise and joy. Strangers stopped to shake my hand, or give an ecstatic hug. Everything had changed. The long night was over. Scotland's day had dawned at last. [19]

That blissful dawn faded quickly enough, as it became clear that New Labour intended to maintain the neoliberal regime by other means, but my point here is a different one. The atmosphere of joy and recognition on 2 May 1997 is, from Wright's description, clearly recognisable as same one which permeated Yes gatherings large and small in the final months of the campaign—but with this difference: where participation in the 1997 General Election was essentially passive, confined to the act of voting and then of celebrating the scale of the Tory defeat, the Yes campaign was an active process, marking the ballot paper merely the final moment in months of public meetings, canvassing, rallies and on-line discussion. This is why Yes Scotland needs to be seen as a social movement, not merely another political campaign. In Colin Barker's discussion of 'collective effervescence' (a term borrowed from Emile Durkheim) he describes patterns of behavioural change which many participants in the Yes campaign will recognise from their own experience:

Participants in collective action regularly report that they 'discover' aspects of their selves, and their capacities, which they had not previously tested: speaking publicly, organizing, taking initiatives which, before the event, they would not have imagined themselves doing. As a result, they felt 'more alive'. These experiences, which might be termed 'empowerment', result from the necessity, imposed by the exigencies of collective action, of taking responsibility for new demands of speech and action which were, in their former pattern of existence, outside their everyday scope. What facilitates such experiences is the focusing of energy and attention on a new collective project, the concentrated 'investment' of cognitive and emotional resources in pursuing a collective decision. ... New conjunctures, incidents and discoveries are liable to alter the appeal or resonance of various 'frames' and 'ideologies'. New possibilities and opportunities may disclose themselves, along with new measures of salience of commitments and social relations. Former patterns of obligation, loyalty and antagonism, may be recast. Previous cognitive, ethical and pragmatic assessments may be re-apprehended. The sequence of new incidents, actions and experiences provides actors with new materials against which to measure existing understandings, with which to confirm or refute arguments, and to assess competing arguments. Collective action, in its short-term and long-term results, provides 'live' materials for altering the social and cultural context of meanings, for remodelling the comprehension of structures and totalities. What was formerly desirable may now seem irrelevant or insufficient, what was previously impossible now becomes an issue to be actively pursued. [20]

The closest comparisons with the Yes campaign are therefore not to be found in Scottish history, but in contemporary Europe, as is suggested in this assessment by George Kerevan:

The Scottish Labour leadership, abetted by the metropolitan media, wrongly tarred proponents of independence as tartan romantics—or even anti-English bigots. The reality is that, by the end, the Yes campaign had morphed into the beginnings of a genuine populist, anti-austerity movement like the ‘Indignant Citizens’ in Greece or the May 15 Movement in Spain. Put another way, it was class politics—not old-style nationalism—that fired the Yes campaign. [21]

But now we must leave these scenes of mass political radicalisation—at least for the moment—and turn to the Dark Side.

Project Fear and the ruling class offensive

Occasionally, writers have to resort to what might be called historically-informed speculation about the collective attitude of political actors. For the British ruling class in the referendum crisis, however, no speculation is necessary since its representatives have been admirably clear about their reasons for opposing Scottish independence. It is obviously not because secession would pose an immediate threat to the existence of capitalism. Indeed, withdrawal from the EU following an ‘in-out’ referendum of the sort proposed by UKIP and supported by the Conservative right would actually involve far greater problems for British business. The real concerns are geopolitical, and were well expressed, 6 months before the referendum, by a Labour figure: George Robertson.

Robertson has a career path characteristic of certain kind of reformist politician. A Scottish MP from 1978, opposition defence spokesperson from 1992, Minister for Defence in the Labour Government from 1997 and Secretary General of NATO from 1999, he was finally rewarded for his services to Western imperialism with a seat in the House of Lords in 2004: arise, Baron Robertson of Port Ellen. In a hysterical speech to the Brookings Institution in Washington on 7 April, Robertson asked who would cheer in the event of a Yes vote:

Not the nearly half of the Scottish population who might oppose separation. Not the English who would find themselves in a country that is minus a third of its landmass, without 10 percent of its GNP, and losing five million of its population. And this would be for them a much diminished country whose global position would be open to question.

Leave aside the implication that Scotland belongs to England; the key words here are ‘global position’:

The loudest cheers for the breakup of Britain would come from our adversaries and from our enemies. For the second military power in the West to shatter this year would be cataclysmic in geopolitical terms.

The only beneficiaries, Robertson intoned, would be ‘the forces of darkness’, by which he appeared to include the national movements in Catalonia, the Basque country and Flanders. [22]

These are not simply the twilight ravings of a Labour buffoon. The SNP is committed removing nuclear weapons from Scotland and there are virtually no other deep water bases on the UK coastline where the submarines which carry them can be docked. To construct an alternative would involve massive expenditure—the Ministry of Defence calculated the potential cost of relocating Trident from the Clyde to the south of England, at £35 billion—and will provoke resistance from the populations now expected to live with next to them. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office regularly expressed fears that the UK might be removed as one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—with the power of veto which this position confers—as the result of an Argentinean conspiracy backed by other Latin American states and India, which would be well-placed to inherit the position of its former colonial master. [23] Serious organs of ruling class opinion made similar judgements in the final weeks of the

campaign. ‘Unionists elsewhere in the UK should admit more than a modicum of self-interest’, wrote Phillip Stephens in the Financial Times: ‘The loss of Scotland would diminish Britain in almost every dimension one can think of.’ [24] The Economist agreed:

The rump of Britain would be diminished in every international forum: why should anyone heed a country whose own people shun it? Since Britain broadly stands for free trade and the maintenance of international order, this would be bad for the world. [25]

In other words, Scottish secession would at the very least make it more difficult Britain to play its current role in ‘the international order’, if only by reducing its practical importance for the USA.

Finally, in this connection, the British ruling class were also aware that an immediate consequence of a vote for Scottish independence would be to place a question mark over the existential viability of Northern Ireland, since the Union has always been with Britain, not England, as Ulster Unionists of all varieties were perfectly well aware. This is not because Sinn Fein and the SDLP are particularly enthusiastic for Scottish independence: ‘While the unionist parties have repeatedly called for an independent Scotland to be rejected, the nationalist parties have remained quiet despite their backing for independence’, noted the Belfast Telegraph: ‘Both Sinn Fein and the SDLP have over the last two years taken an effective vow of silence on the issue—even though they continue to campaign for a united Ireland.’ The article then quotes Sinn Fein’s Fermanagh and South Tyrone MLA Phil Flanagan expressing general support for Scottish self-determination, before adding:

‘But it is not for us to lecture the people of Scotland on how they should vote. It is not for anyone to cross the Irish Sea and tell the people of Scotland what their own decision should be; we are all the better if we leave this in their hands.’ [26]

These comments express more than political discretion, as James Maxwell points out:

Despite [Sinn Fein] being the largest nationalist party at the Stormont Assembly for nearly a decade and steadily increasing its share of the vote at Irish parliamentary elections, support for a 32-county Ireland remains remarkably low. The most recent Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, an authoritative account of political attitudes in the north, shows that 73 per cent of the Ulster electorate as a whole wants to remain part of the UK, with 52 per cent of Catholic voters content to maintain the union with Britain. (The figure for Protestants is 96 per cent.) A number of factors have eroded republican sentiment in recent years: economic crisis and austerity in the south, the growing indifference of the Dublin political class to the all-Ireland project, the emergence of a northern Catholic middle-class, much of which is employed in a public sector widely assumed to be dependent on British state subsidies. [27]

Sinn Fein have established themselves in a governing-party niche from which—quite like the SNP in this respect—they pursue a social neoliberal agenda (which has also entrenched religious-‘ethnic’ divisions) in which the former left republicanism of at least some of the leadership is now largely rhetorical. Scottish independence would destabilise the situation in ways that no-one could foresee, thus threatening the Good Friday settlement. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see how they could avoid calling for a referendum on unification, however unwillingly, without losing significant levels of support, even though it would not be in conditions or to a timetable of their choosing. And so potentially the rump of the British state could be reduced still further.

These geopolitical considerations did not, of course, feature strongly in the arguments of Better Together. As the Scottish historian Colin Kidd correctly noted: ‘The welfare state apart, Britishness inspires acquiescence rather than vocal commitment among “No” supporters. Anxiety predominates.’ Kidd shared these anxieties: ‘[Salmond] is taking major risks—on EU membership, cross-border pensions schemes, the currency, and an economy geared for

centuries to an integrated British market.' [28] It was these issues on which the No campaign focussed, Darling even letting slip that the name which most aptly summarised the objectives of Better Together was 'Project Fear', the essence of which was to terrorise the population with threats to jobs, pensions and services. [29]

On 13 February 2014 Conservative Chancellor George Osborne came to Edinburgh to announce that all three Unionist parties agreed Scotland would not be allowed to join a currency union with Rest of the UK (RUK) in the event of a Yes vote. Salmond was widely mocked for his unwillingness, in the first of his televised debates with Darling on 5 August, to say what Plan B for the currency would involve if RUK refused to agree to a currency union. In fact, as he pointed out subsequently, there were another three options—using the pound as a floating currency, adopting the Euro or establishing a Scottish currency—but his core position was that refusal would be irrational and self-defeating for RUK. That may well have been the case, although faced with a challenge from the right by UKIP it is unwise to rely on the capitalist rationality of the Tories, otherwise we would not now be looking at a referendum on EU membership and departure from the European Court of Human Rights; but from the perspective of the socialist left, the problem with Salmond's position was precisely that RUK would have agreed to a currency union. A nominally independent Scotland would have remained under the tutelage of the Bank of England, which would have underwritten Scottish banks and financial institutions, and the Treasury, which would have underwritten Scotland's historical debt and issued any new debt. As their price, the Bank of England-Treasury nexus would have required a fiscal compact setting a limit on the size of Scotland's structural deficit relative to a fixed percentage of GDP. If either the structural deficit or the ratio of debt to GDP were above that fixed percentage at the point when the currency union was established, then the Scottish Government would be required to implement a regime of cuts to reduce them to the agreed levels: failure to do so would trigger the end of the end of the currency union. This was a recipe for permanent subjection to the neoliberal regime.

The arguments of No supporters therefore oscillated between two claims. One involved the SNP deliberately imposing neoliberal policies as a matter of choice, the key evidence for this being the Salmond's aim of cutting corporation tax by 3%. This was indeed an odious policy and one opposed by Yes campaigners outside the SNP, but it was scarcely convincing coming from supporters of a Labour Party that had actually cut corporation tax by 5%: the Scottish Labour manifesto in 2001 even boasted that the New Labour government had 'lowered corporation tax rates to their ever lowest level'. [30] The other was that the SNP might wish to deliver reforms, but that would be helpless in the face of international capital. 'The reality is that the left in and labour movement in Scotland, decimated by decades of deindustrialisation and defeats, are currently too weak to shape a new Scottish state', wrote Seamus Milne: 'Instead the SNP and its business friends would be likely to do that—a neoliberal world where small states are at the mercy of corporate power without an exceptionally determined political leadership.' [31] Ben Jackson was similarly depressed:

If left-nationalists aspire to something more radical than a social-democratic Labour government, then they are of course correct to suppose that no such agenda will be forthcoming from any British government in the foreseeable future. But they are wrong to if they think that such an agenda will emerge in an independent Scotland. There is insufficient popular support in Scotland for such radical policies, just as there is insufficient popular support for it elsewhere in the United Kingdom. [32]

The nature of the Yes campaign itself refutes these claims. What was perhaps most dispiriting about the arguments for No was the utter feeling of helplessness and despair which they engendered. As we have seen, the movement for Yes was occasionally referred to as an example of anti-politics, but this is actually more true of the No side, in the sense that it did not argue on political grounds at all, but simply pretended that inescapable economic facts meant that the choice to secede was irrational and self-destructive. 'Do you honestly think that a UK company is going to situate in a more socialist Scotland when the Tory government had created the perfect low tax, low regulation, low wage capitalist environment?' [33] Thus George Galloway, the Respect MP, on his speaking tour against independence; but consider the utterly defeatist implications of his statement: if financial markets and capitalist investment strategies would prevent an independent Scotland moving leftwards, they would also do the same to the UK. Socialism in a single country, the UK no less than Scotland, is certainly impossible, but these arguments—if taken seriously rather than as a stick with which to beat the Yes campaign—would mean there was no point in even

beginning to initiate radical change of any sort. This is to capitulate to bourgeois political economy; there is no understanding of how a Yes vote, achieved on the basis of a mass left-wing insurgency would immediately change the balance of forces and open up a new field of possibilities.

The moment of crisis

Complacent and assured of victory for the majority of the campaign, the British ruling class were seized by sudden panic as it entered the penultimate week. A YouGov poll published in the Sunday Times on 7 September put Yes in the lead for the first time with 51%. The reaction was well captured by a headline in the Financial Times: ‘Ruling elite aghast as union wobbles’. [34] This is sometimes treated as a ‘rogue’ poll, but it was not quite as isolated as is sometimes represented. Two days later The Guardian reported: ‘The [new] poll by TNS found that support for independence has jumped by six points in the last month, putting the yes vote at 38% and the no vote at 39%, wiping out a 12-point lead for the pro-UK campaign led by former chancellor Alistair Darling’. [35] According to Ashcroft’s data, only 48% of Yes voters had made their minds up before the final month of campaigning and it is at least conceivable that this was reflected in YouGov’s findings.

What happened next was instructive about how the British ruling class operates. Downing Street held a reception for business leaders: ‘He left us in no doubt we should speak out’, said one chief executive who attended.’ Campaign leaders from the Unionist parties made calls: ‘Those phone calls can be very persuasive’, said one figure familiar with the operation.’ [36] And, by Thursday 11 September, businesses were competing to warn of the dangers of Scottish independence. First the oil companies Shell and BP claimed that jobs were at risk in Aberdeen and Shetland; then a stream of banks and financial institutions including the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), Lloyds Banking Group, Standard Life and Tesco Bank announced contingency plans for the departure of their headquarters from Edinburgh to London; finally Asda, John Lewis, and Marks and Spencer and threatened the price rises that would follow. Many of these companies wrote to individual staff members highlighting the threat to their continued employment in the event of independence—a none-too-subtle hint about how they were expected to behave in the polling booth and a genuine example of intimidation, although it was of course not reported in that context. The example of the RBS is particularly interesting in relation to the unity of state and capital in this operation. On the evening of Wednesday, while the RBS Board were discussing whether to announce to its shareholders a plan to move its registered office to London, officials at the Treasury already were emailing the BBC about decision, forty-five minutes before it had actually been made, although the BBC reported it immediately as established fact. [37]

These manoeuvres were in most respects simply an amplification of existing components of Project Fear, but now voiced by representatives of Capital themselves. The panic of 6 September however also resulted in a new theme being introduced into the rhetoric of Better Together. The possibility of a Yes victory arose because of shifts in attitude among two groups: former non-voters who were registering in order to vote Yes, and Labour voters who were disregarding their instructions to vote No. Whether these shifts would have been enough to actually deliver victory it is impossible to say; it may have been that the distance which the campaign had to make up was simply too great. Nevertheless, the British ruling class genuinely believed that it was possible and the burden of responsibility which weighed on the Scottish Labour Party to save the Union was therefore immense. The theme with which it sought to do so was not exactly Hope—which is always a dangerous emotion to arouse if your intention is ultimately to bury it beneath new waves of austerity—but Vaguely Uplifting if Unspecific Sentiments about Our Shared Past, Present and Future. One figure was absolutely central to this endeavour: Gordon Brown.

Immediately prior to the referendum, John Curtice of Strathclyde University told The Economist: ‘The truth is that David Cameron is reliant on Gordon Brown to save his skin.’ [38] He certainly did his best. During a speech at a Labour rally in Maryhill on the eve of the poll Brown strutted and fretted his hour upon the stage, impressing metropolitan journalists—apparently unfamiliar with the rhetorical techniques deployed by any half-way competent

speaker at a trade union conference or left-wing meeting—with his ‘passion’: ‘And what we’ve built together with solidarity and sharing, let no narrow nationalism split asunder.’ Nationalisms are always ‘narrow’, unless the subject is British nationalism, which now apparently encompasses the dreams and wishes of the entire global population, since at one point Brown claimed that, ‘through our membership of the UK’ ‘we’ would be able to fight for ‘our dream...our demand’: ‘A world not of a separate state, but a world of social justice people can believe in.’ [39] As George Monbiot justly remarked:

There’s another New Labour weasel word to add to its lexicon (other examples include reform, which now means privatisation; and partnership, which means selling out to big business). Once solidarity meant making common cause with the exploited, the underpaid, the excluded. Now, to these cyborgs in suits, it means keeping faith with the banks, the corporate press, cuts, a tollbooth economy and market fundamentalism. [40]

The overblown and barely coherent verbiage with which Brown treated his audience was mainly for internal Labour consumption, to stiffen the sinews and summon up the blood of the waverers, but he had other admirers. Tory intellectual Allan Massie called Brown’s speech ‘the rhetorical highpoint of the debate. It gave renewed heart to Unionists of all parties’. Tory MSP Murdo Fraser spoke of how there had been ‘an urgent need for the No campaign to stop the this leakage of Labour support and who better to address this but Gordon Brown’, whose ‘late intervention and his powerful case for keeping the UK together’ was, according to Fraser, ‘undoubtedly very significant in meaning Labour supporters fell behind the No vote’. [41]

Anyone inclined to give Brown the benefit of the doubt should contrast his marked reluctance to show solidarity with any actual workers in struggle with his eagerness to please the City of London. In his last Mansion House speech prior to becoming Prime Minister, in June 2007, Brown made his tenth and final obeisance to the assembled Masters of the Universe (London Branch):

Brown congratulated himself for presiding over a light-touch system of regulation and asked them to applaud him for ‘resisting pressure’ for a crackdown. Moving to his peroration, he smothered them with more unction. ‘Britain needs more of vigour, ingenuity and inspiration that you already demonstrate’. He extolled the City for inventing ‘the most modern instruments of finance’—the very instruments that would soon afterwards bring the entire Western banking system to the edge of destruction. [42]

Brown often invokes his father, a Church of Scotland minister. At St Bryce’s Kirk in Kirkcaldy, where John Ebenezer Brown used to preach, there is now a food bank: welcome to the Britain we have built together with solidarity and sharing. [43]

Brown’s most important intervention in relation to the outcome was actually made on 8 September when he—a backbench Opposition MP—announced a fast-track timetable for further devolution, beginning on 19 September, in the event of a No vote. In doing this he was merely consolidating the desperate promises made by all three of the Unionist party leaders after the YouGov poll showing Yes in the lead. And, sure enough, on 16 September, Cameron, Clegg and Miliband all appeared on the front of the Labour’s loyal Scottish tabloid, the Daily Record, their signatures adorning a mock-vellum parchment headed ‘The Vow’, confirming that the Scottish Parliament would indeed be granted further powers if only the Scots would consent to stay within the Union. It is worth pausing for a moment to consider the meaning of this episode. Cameron, remember, had been so anxious to exclude a third option of further devolution from the ballot paper that he gave Salmond everything else he demanded in order to ensure this outcome. Now, facing the unthinkable, he and the other Unionists had effectively changed the nature of the question within a fortnight of the ballot taking place. From being a choice between the status quo and independence it had effectively become a choice between devo max and independence, even though tens of thousands had already used their postal vote, unaware that the terms of the referendum had shifted.

On the basis of Ashcroft's polling, the majority of No voters (72%) had already decided on their position before the final month of campaigning and had done so on the basis of concerns about the pound (57%), pensions (37%), the NHS (36%) and defence and security (29%). [44] What the Vow seems to have done was shift the No vote at the margins of the undecided and give some existing No voters, particularly in the Labour Party, a justification for voting No that was not simply based on fear. I noted earlier that, when the referendum was first announced, the majority position was for devo max. What happened in the course of the campaign was that, having no way of expressing their position in the ballot, voters in the devo max camp polarised, with the majority opting for independence as being closer to their desired outcome. The late reintroduction of devo max as the actual alternative to independence was enough to sway a sufficient number of voters into retreating from their recent conversion. The very success of the Yes campaign had pushed the political leadership of the British state into side-lining Better Together and offering their only remaining inducement: constitutional change short of independence. It is, however, almost certain that the Unionist parties would have offered this anyway.

On 11 September sixty English and Welsh Labour MPs arrived at Glasgow Central Station on the so-called 'Love Train' or 'Save the Union Express'. They were met, not only by their Scottish colleagues, but by Yes supporter Matt Lygate, who accompanied them along Buchanan Street on a rickshaw with a sound system playing 'The Imperial March' from Star Wars and declaiming through a loudhailer: 'Our imperial masters have arrived!' and 'People of Glasgow! Welcome your imperial masters!' One notably humourless response to this comedic highpoint of the campaign complained: 'The implication is that Scotland, like Kenya or India, is just another colony, at last seeking its rightful independence.' [45] In fact, most Yes supporters are perfectly aware that Scotland is not a colonised or oppressed nation. On the contrary, one of the main socialist reasons for independence is precisely because, as part of the UK, Scotland is itself an oppressor and one, in relation to its size and population, with a disproportionately important role in both the British Empire and in the contemporary nuclear strategy of US imperialism. [46] The point was more about Labour's attitude towards its supporters; the assumption that they could simply be summoned to vote in obedience with the leadership's wishes, than with Scotland's position in the world order. But there is a sense in which to describe Labour as 'imperial masters' is wrong, because it is of course not the master but the ever-eager servant of Empire. What better way for Labour to celebrate the centenary of the Social Democracy's great betrayal of August 1914, than with another affirmation that its primary loyalty lies, not with the working class, but with maintaining the territorial integrity of the British state?

Participation and outcome

By the time the electoral roll closed on 2 September 2014, 97% (4,283,392) of the Scottish population had registered to vote—330,000 for the first time, including 109,000 of the 16- and 17-year-olds specially enfranchised for the occasion. This was the highest level of voter registration in Scottish or British history since the introduction of universal suffrage, with 118,000 people registering in August alone. By the time the ballot closed at 10.00 pm on 18 September, 84.6% (3,619,915) had actually voted, compared with 63.8% in the 2010 British General Election and 50.4% in the 2011 Scottish Parliamentary election. The most recent General Election with comparable levels of Scottish voter participation to 2014 was 1950, the first to follow the Second World War and the establishment of the Welfare State, when 83.9% of those registered voted. But turnout in 2014 was also significantly up from the 60.4% who voted in the 1997 referendum what led to the establishment of the Scottish Parliament. Shortly after that event, Eric Hobsbawm said: 'We would have thought it impossible, twenty years ago, that only 60 per cent of the citizens would vote in the first election for a Scottish parliament in three hundred years, an election supposed to realise the historical ambition of the people of that country.' He went on the contrast the behaviour of the Scots unfavourably with that of black South Africans in 1994, before drawing this general conclusion: 'Elections in the West are increasingly events managed by minorities, which do not involve majorities, at the cost of the integrity of the political process.' [47] In 2014, SNP leader and First Minister Alex Salmond could also draw on the South African comparison, but now to quite different effect. 'Last Monday...I saw people queuing up—and it was not a short queue, [it was] a long queue—in Dundee to register to vote, almost reminiscent of the scenes in South Africa when

some of a certain age remember 20 years or so ago people queued to vote in the first free elections.' [\[48\]](#) Salmond was not, of course, comparing the Scots with the victims of Apartheid. This most astute of contemporary bourgeois politicians can legitimately be accused many things, but not of being an imbecile; he was simply drawing attention to the currently quite uncharacteristic popular enthusiasm being displayed for the political process. Whatever else might be said about the outcome of the referendum, no-one could claim that it was determined by a minority in conditions of generalised apathy.

Yet the nature of the outcome cannot be evaded. For, after these extraordinary levels of voter registration and only marginally less impressive levels of voter turnout, the Scots ultimately opted against establishing their own state by 55.3% (2,001,926) to 44.7% (1,617,989). Only 4 regions out of 32 voted Yes although, as we shall see, their location and composition is highly significant. Other than the number of votes for each side, and their breakdown to regional and constituency levels, what else do we know about the result? Here a certain amount of impressionism is unavoidable. Two opinion polls were carried out during and immediately after the referendum: one was by the polling organisation of Conservative peer Michael Ashcroft, the other by YouGov which accurately predicted the result. [\[49\]](#) Beyond these, I have had to rely on a combination of personal participant observation, information from others involved in the campaign and media reports. In spite of the difficulties, a number of tendencies are relatively clear.

Age: over-45s were most likely to oppose independence, particularly the over-65s, among who between two thirds and three quarter voted No; young voters (16-24) were almost evenly split and, while Ashcroft's claim that 71% of the newly enfranchised 16 and 17-year olds voted Yes are unsustainable because of the smallness of his sample, it is nevertheless clear that they did not form the anti-independence bloc that initially appeared possible. The only age cohort with an unambiguous majority for independence was 25-39-year olds, although (since the polls measure overlapping age-ranges) this may also be true of 40-54-year olds.

Gender and ethnicity: between 3% and 9% more women voted No than men, though that may partly reflect female predominance in the older age groups and the extent of female opposition to independence in any case reduced over the course of the campaign. Based on pre-referendum polling, as many as two thirds of Scots of Asian origin may have voted Yes—a fact of some significance in Glasgow where this group has long been regarded by Labour as voting fodder for the Sarwar dynasty. [\[50\]](#)

Class: Data compiled by John Mellon in June 2014 shows the level of support for independence to be highest among supervisors, small business owners and routine workers (e.g. assembly line workers, waiters and cleaners), with intermediate workers (e.g. secretaries and computer operators) and senior managers showing the lowest support for independence. [\[51\]](#) As this suggests, the Scottish bourgeoisie was overwhelmingly against independence. With a handful of exceptions, notably Brian Souter of Stagecoach and Jim McColl of Clyde Blowers Capital, large-scale capital was committed to the Union: Yes-supporting businesses tended to be small- or medium-sized concerns on the borderline with the petty bourgeoisie proper, relying on local markets and suppliers. Yes-supporting employers, mostly grouped in Business for Scotland [BfS], were criticised in the Unionist press precisely because of their irrelevance.

Close examination of Business for Scotland's declared member list shows that the group has only a tiny handful of members who employ significant numbers of Scots, and literally none with a substantial cross-border trade. In other words, it could scarcely be less representative of the industries that provide the majority of Scotland's private-sector jobs and which, according to the No campaign, are at risk from a Yes vote. ... The Yes side's 200, not all of whom are declared members of BfS, include just three identified as active directors of public limited companies. The vast majority are small businesspeople such as guesthouse and shopkeepers, or sole traders such as consultants, designers and accountants. [\[52\]](#)

The contrast between them and the businesses supporting No—including Keith Cochrane of Weir Group, James Lithgow of Lithgow's or Ian Wood of Wood Group—could not be more stark. [\[53\]](#)

The middle classes were also largely united in voting No, with their bohemian and cultural wings the main source of dissent. The working class—still the overwhelming majority of the Scottish population—was, however, deeply divided: support for Yes came most strongly from the poorest and most precarious communities, often in the peripheral housing schemes—indeed, it was from this group that most of the new voters emerged; support for No tended to be based among more securely employed and organised sections of the class, as is suggested by personal testimony from one Yes campaigner in Edinburgh on the day of the referendum:

I visited 2 areas to get the Yes vote out. The first one was Dryden Gardens [in Leith] which was made up of mainly well-paid workers and pensioners living in terraced houses. On the knocker half of them had changed their vote [to No] or were not prepared to share their intentions with me. I remember being thoroughly depressed by the experience. Following this, I walked round the corner to some Housing Association flats that were more blue-collar with a large number of migrant families. Every Yes voter I spoke to had held firm and had already voted or were waiting on family to go and vote together. It was very uplifting . [\[54\]](#)

It is important to keep in mind, however, that these were tendencies, not an absolute division; but Edinburgh, where the vote was 61.10% (194,638) for No, 38.90% (123,927) and for Yes, was illustrative of these class trends. Of all major cities in the UK, the Scottish capital has both the lowest percentage of total working age residents claiming Jobseeker's Allowance and, outside of London, the highest average gross annual earnings per resident. It has both a disproportionately large middle class and a working class employed in the sectors supposedly threatened by independence, including higher education (the University of Edinburgh is the city's third biggest employer) and finance (RBS, Lloyds and Standard Life are respectively the fourth, fifth and sixth biggest employers).

One striking feature of the working-class Yes vote was that it was concentrated in what were formerly the great heartlands of Labour support. In Dundee and Glasgow the Yes vote was respectively 57.35% (53,629) and 53.49% (194,779), with similar results recorded in North Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire; Inverclyde came within 87 votes of a Yes majority. These five regions alone accounted for over a quarter of the Yes votes. Partly because of these shifts in the Labour heartlands, the final result for the Yes side was better than had seemed possible when the campaign began in 2012. Of the 51 polls conducted between 1986 and 2012, 39 showed support between 30 and 39%, only 3 showed it above 40%, while 9 showed it below 30%, but crucially, the majority of the latter were conducted after the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999—in other words, the lowest polling was chronologically nearest to the decision to hold the referendum. [\[55\]](#) As recently as May 2013 two pollsters associated with Ipsos Mori claimed that, with two thirds of voters intending to vote No, the outcome was not in doubt. [\[56\]](#) The result was therefore a great achievement for the Yes campaign, but it is also important, if only for future reference, to record the greatest omission from its strategy.

If the strengths of the Yes campaign were breadth and diversity, one key weakness was a complete absence of focus on skilled and organised workers at their actual workplaces, although this is a common problem among European social movements which emerged since 2011. Of the trade unions, only ASLEF, the CWU, Community, the remnants of the NUM and USDAW openly supported a No vote. Similarly, only the Scottish areas of the RMT and the Prison Officer's Association, and the habitually rebellious Edinburgh, Stirling, Fife and Falkirk branch of the CWU (the second-biggest in Scotland) supported a Yes vote. Some, notably the PCS, followed the lead of the Scottish TUC and tried to present both sides of the argument for their members to decide. It was clear, however, that even when unions could not formally endorse a No vote, the attitude of many full-time officials and lower levels of the bureaucracy were hostile to Yes. The case of Unite is particularly interesting. Support for No was impossible, if only because more of the union's members voted for the SNP than Labour in the Scottish Parliamentary elections in 2011 (not in itself necessarily a vote for independence, of course); but in local branches the picture was different. It was only to be expected that BAE Systems Director Ian King would write to workers on the Edinburgh site warning of the dangers posed by independence to their jobs and pensions; but in aerospace and shipbuilding more widely, senior Unite representatives actively courted Tory ministers and Labour No MPs for meetings to 'defend the defence industry'. In some workplaces CEO's and managers organised 'employee briefings', which were in effect mass

meetings to agitate for a No vote in which the union organisation was effectively on the same side as the employer. It is not possible to assess how widespread or successful these ‘partnerships’ of employer and union actually were, but it certainly added to the overall momentum of Project Fear. Against this the Yes campaign had no answer. Unorganised or precarious workers could be reached in their communities; but where workers were faced with an alliance of employers and unions arguing for No, as was the case in defence-related industries, then a response was required to challenge these position on the shop floor, even if this had to be mounted from outside. The failure to reach, let alone convince, the organised sections of the working class at least contributed towards the victory of the No camp.

Defeat in victory, victory in defeat

I quoted earlier the concerns of Scottish historian Colin Kidd to the prospect of a Yes vote. It is only fair, therefore, to quote his response to its removal:

The relief was visceral. ... coming to at 4.00am I experienced a calm I hadn't felt for months. I sensed that the nationalists (sic) had lost. Total silence: the sound of the quiet Unionist majority celebrating. [\[57\]](#)

His relief was widely shared, and only by this silent majority. No sooner was the result beyond dispute than markets began to rally: the value of stocks in Scottish financial companies, which had been in freefall during the final stages of the campaign, soared by £2 billion with RBS and Lloyds at the forefront. The FTSE 100 index rose 18.6 points to 6837.9. Even Sterling reached a two-year high against the Euro and a two-week high against the Dollar, before falling back to more realistic levels. According to Cameron the monarch purred with delight on being told the result. The Prime Minister himself knew that he would not now go down in history as the modern Lord North, responsible for ‘losing’ Scotland as his predecessor has ‘lost’ America, but more importantly that he had averted what one Telegraph columnist described as ‘the biggest constitutional crisis in the nation’s history’, a crisis which would have engulfed, not merely the Coalition Government, but the entire British political system. [\[58\]](#) Nor was the relief felt only in the UK itself. Ulster Loyalists relaxed. In Washington, Obama and Clinton could rest easy in the knowledge that their nuclear arsenal would remain safely ensconced on the Clyde, twenty-five miles from one of the largest population centres in Western Europe. Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang no longer worried that nationalist movements in Catalonia and Xinjiang province would be able to draw sustenance from the Scottish example.

Despite these manifestations of international ruling class satisfaction with the result, some No supporters continued to delude themselves as to the progressive nature of the outcome. Stephen Low, a Labour member of the Red Paper Collective, noted: ‘Scotland’s membership of the UK has been transformed from being the work of a “parcel o’ rogues” in the eighteenth century to being the freely expressed view of significant majority of Scotland’s people in the twenty first.’ [\[59\]](#) But what exactly have the Scots endorsed? Not some notion of Britishness dating back to the dawn of the eighteenth century, but a very specific contemporary one. For one consequence of the No victory has been to undercut the admittedly self-satisfied claim that Scotland as a nation had never accepted ‘Thatcherism’, as neoliberalism still tends to be described here. In fact, that is exactly what we have done. In future, anyone attempting to claim that we did not vote for privatisation or austerity will simply be told by our rulers that we had our chance to vote for an alternative and refused to do so, thereby implicitly accepting the neoliberal order, to which all three Unionist parties are deeply committed. If the Scots will accept anything, so why should the Coalition or any future Tory government hold back? During the Conservative Annual Conference early in October George Osborne announced policies which included a 2-year benefits freeze and denying housing benefit to 18-21 year olds: the fact that these will affect around a million Scottish families gives some indication of the levels of poverty which already exist and which will now be made even worse. [\[60\]](#) But perhaps the first action of the UK parliament after the referendum was the most symbolic of the geopolitical imperatives which lay behind the No campaign. After allowing a decent interval for the Labour Party Annual Conference to conclude without embarrassment, MPs voted by 524 to 43 to resume bombing Iraq. Britain, the USA and murderous fundamentalist Saudi Arabian regime: together.

As the counts were declared Labour activists had exulted alongside their supposedly hated Conservative enemies. The Observer's Scottish columnist Kevin McKenna quoted a conversation with his daughter Clare, who had become a Yes activist during the campaign: 'So many on the side of the rich and powerful must have been cheering themselves hoarse about the no vote and there were Labour people, our very own, cheering and dancing with them.' [61] Labour's attack-dogs were now quite uninhibited in expressing their contempt for the whole process. 'The quiet people have spoken and no amount of Saltire-waving can spin that story any other way', wrote former Labour MP and arch-Unionist Brian Wilson: 'What happens next is important but also distinctly secondary to the result we already know.' Throughout the campaign No supporters had to intone through gritted teeth and frozen smiles how marvellous the carnival of democracy was, how excellent for the country, whatever the result. But now the rictus grin could be removed: 'We are awash with high-minded twaddle about what a civilised exercise in democracy it was.' [62] Wilson's approval of the quiet, dutiful No voters is matched only by his hatred and rage at the campaign which destabilised what he evidently regards as the natural order in Scotland: 'high minded twaddle'—this is what Labour figures actually think about democracy, if it involves anything other than voting for their party every 5 years. There had been a Labour for Independence group—a heroic endeavour under the circumstances, which was widely derided by the leadership and received relatively little publicity. Allan Grogan, one of the co-convenors, resigned from the party after the referendum and made this, I think accurate, assessment:

The irony is that with a 'yes' vote we would have seen a return to a real Labour Party which most people would have voted for in Scotland. The party, particularly in this nation [i.e. Scotland] is in deep decline, and I fear it may be permanent. [63]

We need not accept the myth of Labour's Golden Past to recognise that independence would potentially have allowed the party to formulate a politics unimpeded by the rightward stampede of the London leadership—although whether they would have accepted the opportunity is of course another question.

The cheering and dancing among Conservative and Labour activists did not last for long. Will Hutton initially sighed with relief that the threatened ethnic holocaust had been avoided: 'Millions of English—and two million Scots—find ourselves delighted that the noxious, destructive division of our island has not happened.' But there is a shadow clouding their delight—unthinkably, the Tories are using the constitutional issue for party advantage! [64] At 7.00 am on 19 September Cameron had given a brief speech outside Downing Street in which he said, amongst other things, that further powers for Scotland would be devolved and a suitably distinguished crossbench peer—Lord Smith of Kelvin—would be appointed to set up a Commission to investigate the options in due course. However, he also intimated that the issue would be tied to that of what has come to be called English Votes for English Laws (EVEL). In plain language, the Tories were now going to use the situation to force a final solution to the West Lothian Question by excluding Scottish MPs—the overwhelming majority of whom are Labour—from voting on so-called 'English' issues. As Murray Pittock wrote of EVEL, long before the campaign began: 'Enthusiasm for it is evidence that devolution is still seen in England not as fundamental change to the government of the UK, but as a sop to the Scots, and that any further developments must punish Scotland not reform England.' [65]

New dawn fades?

Early in the evening of 19 September I took part in the first of many discussions about the future of the Scottish left following the referendum. I had to catch an early train home and, after leaving comrades in a café on Ingram Street in Glasgow's Merchant City, I wandered into George Square, which in the weeks prior to the vote had been the site of daily mass gatherings of Yes supporters—not to listen to formal speeches or participate in rallies, but to meet, discuss, sing or simply to make visible the size and diversity of the movement. It was as if people who were canvassing, leafleting or flyposting—activities which tend to be carried out in small groups—had to return to the Square to refresh themselves in a public space over which they had regularly taken collective control. It was in these days

that Glasgow most resembled the Greek and Spanish cities during the Movement of the Squares—to a far greater extent than in relatively small-scale Scottish manifestations of Occupy.

But on this evening Yes supporters were scattered and few and most overcome with grief. Instead, the Square was filling with triumphant Orange Lodge members, sans regalia, alongside the outright fascists of Britain First and the Scottish Defence League singing ‘Rule, Britannia’ and ‘God Save the Queen’, waving Union Jacks, burning Saltires, throwing Nazi salutes and howling homophobic, racist and sectarian abuse: the poisonous pus seeping from the wounded, fever-ridden body of the threatened state; the monstrous Id of British nationalism awaked by the menace of Scottish self-determination.

What happened the following day was an extraordinary moment of grace. In response to the violence of Friday night, Yes-supporting father and son Andrew and Darren Carnegie of the food share project, Glasgow’s Needy, began to make speeches calling for unity, peace and reconciliation. Over the next two days the Square began to fill with boxes and bags of food, over 2,000 in the end from as far afield as Aberdeen, requiring eight vans and 11 cars to transport them. But was this display of human solidarity with the poverty stricken and state-sanctioned (immediately denounced by disgraced Falkirk Labour MP Eric Joyce as ‘poverty porn’) also an elegiac farewell to the activism unleashed by campaign? Would the inhabitants of housing schemes such as Northfield in Aberdeen, Fintry in Dundee, Craigmillar in Edinburgh and Drumchapel in Glasgow, so recently awakened to political life, now be returned to the silence and oblivion which has been their usual lot before the referendum campaign?

In fact, precisely the opposite happened. Membership of all the pro-independence parties massively increased immediately after the referendum. By Saturday 27 September, that of the SSP had risen from 1,000 to 3,600; of the Scottish Greens from 1,720 to 6,235, and of the SNP from 25,642 to 68,200. (Labour has not reported any rise in membership, although there have been unquantified reports of resignations.) This growth was replicated in the local RIC meetings: in Edinburgh RIC, which had around 20 regular attendees shot up to 137 in the week after the ballot. A series of demonstrations and rallies took place, including one of around 3,000 people outside the Scottish Parliament. The Women for Independence conference on Saturday 4 October in Perth attracted 1,000. Over 7,000 people indicated on Facebook that they were ‘attending’ the RIC conference on 22 November in Glasgow.

For many Yes supporters, particularly those who have only recently become active and have not yet become accustomed to the experience of defeat, their feelings of incomprehension, rage and humiliation could lead them into the trap of blaming those Scots who voted No and to write them off as participants in any further attempt to shape the future. ‘Hell mend them’, as the Scottish phrase goes. Understandable though these feelings are—I confess I shared them in the dark dawn of 19 September—they should be resisted. This is why the slogan of ‘we are the 45%’, raised in the immediate aftermath of the result, is deeply unhelpful: unlike ‘we are the 99%’, it enshrines minority status rather than seeking to overcome it. There are of course limits to how large a majority can ever be, although not, apparently, for Gerry Hassan:

A traditional left approach of embracing ‘the ghetto’ or minority ‘rainbow coalition’ will not deliver a majority to Yes. This is something many on the left and left nationalists have not understood over the last three or four decades: namely, that a political contest carried out by constant retreat and conducted defensively, only results in defeat and demoralisation. The politics of Scotland’s future has to entail getting into the heads and hearts of the middle classes with all their varieties and different sub-parts, from the well-heeled and affluent, to the doing comfortably, and struggling to keep up appearances. ... We are one Scotland. Not 45%, or 55%, or even 99%. [\[66\]](#)

Leaving aside the totalitarian implications of ‘the 100%’ or ‘one Scotland’—the idea that there could ever be complete agreement among the Scots is not only impossible but, given the class divisions within Scottish society, undesirable – there are two problems with this line of argument.

First, it depends on assumptions about both the middle classes and the working class which involve massively overestimating the size of former and equally massively underestimating the size of the latter. Taken together, the three components of the middle classes—the petty bourgeoisie, the professions and the technical-managerial New Middle Class (NMC)—constitute at most 25% of the Scottish population. Victory in any future referendum will only be secured by winning over, not these classes, but those working-class people who feared for their pensions and jobs—scarcely surprising given the conditions of crisis and austerity under which most of us live; others believed that voting no was the genuinely internationalist or solidaristic course, I believe the latter group were mistaken, but Yes supporters have to convince them of this, not denounce them: the achievement of independence, let alone any concrete moves towards socialism, will only be achieved alongside those working-class people who have voted No.

Second, even in relation to the middle classes, the divisions are too great for appeals to ‘one Scotland’ to cut much ice. For some middle-class Scots, voting no was a perfectly rational decision based on an accurate assessment of—and I apologise for using such a terribly old-fashioned term—their class interests. Others, notably, those in certain categories of financial, managerial and administrative employment which previously had the greatest security are now become more vulnerable, not least because of the extent of corporate rationalisation and downsizing that tended to follow the acquisitions and mergers boom of the 1990s and 2000s. The public sector jobs which their University educated children would once have found waiting in graduation are decreasingly available, while Starbucks beckons. In terms of seeking alliances then, the independence movement is unlikely to find them in those sections of the professions and the private sector NMC which still have a material interest in preserving the capitalist system. There are, however, far greater possibilities among the petty bourgeoisie and the public sector and liberal NMC. As always, the very indeterminacy and volatility of middle class attitudes means that their ultimate direction will depend on the availability of a persuasive alternative, not vapid rhetoric which seeks to smooth over fundamental class differences.

Against Devo max

In the aftermath, Yes campaigners are understandably also concerned to ensure that the promises of greater devolution emphasised in the final panic-stricken stages of the No campaign should be honoured. It is understandable because of a healthy distrust of these parties, given their record of being (in Brown’s typically pompous phrase) ‘promise breakers’ over the NHS, student fees and rail renationalisation, to name but a few. However, although voters were originally asked to choose between the status quo and the potentially threatening alternative of independence, the status quo was never going to be an option. The panic of 6 September pressurised the Unionist parties into bringing forward their existing plans; it did not generate them and it would be a terrible mistake for the radical left to become fixated with the extent of new devolved powers or the length of time it will take to introduce them.

The parties made different if overlapping offers about the new powers that were coming to Holyrood over taxation. Labour, the ability to set and control income tax by up to 15p in the pound; the Tories and Lib Dems, to set and control all Scottish income tax. The latter sounds attractive, but as Iain MacWhirter has pointed out, it is a trap. If the Scottish government is left in control over income tax, without corporation tax, inheritance tax, VAT and the rest, there will still be a £4 billion deficit: ‘What the Tories hope is this: the financial squeeze will force radical service cuts that will damage the SNP fatally, because they will have to implement them, and will undermine Labour by reducing its public sector client base.’ [\[67\]](#) But even further tax powers bring their own problems. As The Observer’s business editor notes:

And what if devo max includes some control of corporation tax, national insurance, VAT, capital gains tax or air passenger duty? Following the Irish example, which Salmond was keen to do, regional politicians with the right to vary tax will offer huge tax inducements to win a factory or warehouse, creating a deep financial hole with the

promise of taxpaying jobs in the future to bail them out. It is the same on the global stage, where countries outbid each other for the investment of multinationals. So whatever structure of regional government can be agreed in the wake of the referendum in Scotland (and there is no reason to be optimistic that an agreement is possible), the freedom on offer is one that provides councils with little more than the tools to undercut their neighbours. [68]

What this seems to suggest is that only the most complete form of devo max would constitute a viable solution. Devo max in this sense means, as Brown has said on numerous occasions, ‘as close to a federal state as you can be in a country where one nation is 85 per cent of the population’. [69] The current enthusiasm for federalism stretches from the reformist left to the centre-right. [70] However, it is no more attractive a proposition.

I wrote earlier that Cameron was not opposed to devo max in this ‘federal’ sense, quite the contrary. If the essential integrity of the British state was maintained at the military-diplomatic level, then further devolution, even to the point of outright federalism, would be an acceptable outcome for the majority of the British ruling class. On 11 July 2011 John Major gave an interesting speech to the Ditchley Foundation in which he asked these rhetorical questions: ‘Why not devolve all responsibilities except foreign policy, defence and management of the economy? Why not let Scotland have wider tax-raising powers to pay for their policies and, in return, abolish the present block-grant settlement, reduce Scottish representation in the Commons, and cut the legislative burden at Westminster?’ [71]

The Scottish Constitutional Commission, which is not noted for being sympathetic to Tory ideas, proposed a very similar arrangement, called ‘Secure Autonomy’: ‘It would deliver most of the proposed advantages of independence while preserving the security, economic, military and diplomatic advantages commonly attributed to the Union by its supporters. [72] There are serious dangers here, at least for any approach to independence which sees it as opening up possibilities for socialist change.

The meaning of devolution has changed over the decades. Previously, it was a way of meeting popular aspirations without threatening the economic order; now it is also potentially useful to further implanting social neoliberalism. The more politics is emptied of content, the more social neoliberal regimes need to prove that democracy is still meaningful—not of course by extending the areas of social life under democratic control, but by multiplying the opportunities for citizen-consumers to take part in elections for local councillors, mayors, Police and Crime Commissioners, members of the Welsh and London Assemblies, and the Scottish, European and British Parliaments. Here, responsibility for implementing anti-reforms is spread beyond governing parties and central state apparatuses to elected bodies whose policy options are severely restricted both by statute and—as in the case of local councils—reliance on the central state for most of their funding. In the case of the devolved nations the assumption is that the people most likely to participate in local decision-making will be members of the middle-class, who can be expected to behave, en masse, in ways which will impose restrictions on local taxation and public spending, and thus maintain the neoliberal order with a supposedly popular mandate: atomised citizens voting for which services they want to close. Consequently, devo max is not just an inadequate, but still desirable alternative to independence: it is a means of preserving the British state and the neoliberal order. As expected the SNP have now come out for the most complete form of devo max—one reason why socialists cannot simply call for an SNP vote. [73] Far from shifting attention from independence to devo max, the radical left should reject the latter completely except in so far as it involves the greater democratisation of Scottish society rather than ‘powers’ for the Scottish sub-state.

What next?

The main impetus for the Yes campaign was not nationalism, but a desire for social change expressed through the demand for self-determination. The danger is that it will now become nationalist in orientation, particularly if the movement simply becomes an electoral support-group for the SNP. The thousands of mainly working-class people

who have joined that organisation will change its inner dynamics, but they are unlikely to change its overall character as a mildly reformist party on the left wing of the social neoliberal spectrum.

The way in which campaigners flooded into the three main independence-supporting parties is indicative of a deeply-felt need to find a form of political expression, which none of them will be able to fully provide. RIC can only do so in part. Existing on the borderland between a campaign and a social movement, it faces the problem of how to continue campaigning for the goals which it sought to achieve through independence when the prospect of independence is no longer on the immediate agenda. Can it do so without simply fragmenting into multiple adjuncts to existing campaigns? This is the main question which confronts it as third and most important conference looms. RIC at any rate exists: the second issue is the absence from the Scottish political scene of a party of the left, large and serious enough to stand for election, but also committed to activity in the streets and workplaces. As a united front involving existing parties, RIC cannot become that kind of party, but the unaffiliated individuals, who were the basis of its mass support and that of the wider campaign, will have to be the basis of its membership.

All of the existing left groups contain militants and activists who would make a valuable contribution to any new formation; but simply attempting to recombine these groups, with all their inherited historic divisions and internal membership structures, whether as ‘platforms’ or permanent factions, would be fatal to this enterprise, as would a recapitulation of the cult of personality, the politics of celebrity, which helped destroy the SSP. Podemos in Spain, which also emerged from an actual movement, is perhaps the closest to what is required, but it too has problems, not least those stemming from the attempt to position itself as ‘beyond left or right’—anti-politics in this sense being precisely what Scotland does not need right now. There are no exact models and we will consequently have to build our own. Politically, such a formation will certainly require a revolutionary current, but part of a process in which new activists can actually find out what the terms reform and revolution currently mean, and where they stand in relation to them. In terms of the programme for an independent Scotland, some elements are obvious: withdrawal from NATO and the EU, establishment of a republic and a Scottish currency unencumbered by the Bank of England, renationalisation of services and utilities, and the repeal of the anti-trade union laws. Nationalisation of the oil industry will be an urgent task, not least to pay for the social reconstruction required after the devastations of neoliberalism and austerity. These are not in themselves revolutionary demands—that they seem so is an indication of how far right politics has moved in the last 40 years—but in the current context they will rightly be seen as a breach with the order of capital. Working towards that will involve not only necessary defensive struggles against austerity, war and environmental destruction, but for the democratisation of Scottish society, in readiness for when the moment of independence becomes a possibility again.

That may not take as long as some imagine. I noted earlier that, in the eyes of the ruling class, the No vote effectively amounted to an endorsement of the neoliberal project. Working-class No voters obviously did not intend this, and no-one on either side was consciously inviting an escalation of austerity, but that is what is happening, with Labour abetting or endorsing the attacks. Resistance should be conducted on an UK-wide basis wherever possible, but as the attacks deepen, the question for the Scots of whether there is more ‘risk’ involved in remaining in the UK than breaking with it will come to the fore again, especially if the 2015 General Election produces another Tory-led government. The British state is unlikely to allow another ‘official’ referendum, especially one which our rulers think they will lose, so an ‘unofficial’ manifestation along Catalan lines will be necessary and that situation, the question will become who is stronger, the social movement or the state. One of the advisers to the No campaign, Adam Tompkins of the University of Glasgow, wrote in the aftermath:

The Union was not saved on Thursday; it won a reprieve. ... I have long thought that the Union could withstand the threat of Scottish separation, once. But if circumstances were to bring us to a second independence referendum any time soon, I would place a large sum on the outcome being very different. [74]

I would also make that bet.

- [1] Red Paper Collective, 'The Question Isn't Yes or No', *Scottish Left Review* 73 (November/December 2012), [2].
- [2] Beyond politics, the prospect of an end to the British state seemed to infuse some No voters—particularly activists on the Unionist left—with a sense of existential dread and ontological uncertainty.
- [3] Daniel Bensaïd, 'Leaps! Leaps! Leaps!', *International Socialism*, second series, 95 (Summer 2002), 77; *Lenin Reloaded: Towards a Politics of Truth*, edited by Sebastian Budgen, Stathis Kouvelakis and Slavoj Žižek (Durham, North Carolina: University of North Carolina, 2007), 153.
- [4] Daniel Bensaïd, 'Leaps! Leaps! Leaps!', *International Socialism*, second series, 95 (Summer 2002), 77; *Lenin Reloaded: Towards a Politics of Truth*, edited by Sebastian Budgen, Stathis Kouvelakis and Slavoj Žižek (Durham, North Carolina: University of North Carolina, 2007), 153.
- [5] Will Hutton, 'We have 10 Days to Find a Settlement to Save the Union', *The Observer* (7 September 2014).
- [6] C. J. Sansom, 'Saying No will Arrest the Rise of Populist Nationalism', *The Guardian* (15 September 2014). See also 'Historical Note', in *Dominion* (London: Mantle, 2012), 590-592 where Sampson actually compares the SNP to the inter-war fascist parties.
- [7] Michael Keating, *Nations against the State: the New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland* (Second edition, Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), 24.
- [8] Billy Bragg, 'Voting Nationalist in Scotland isn't an Act of Class Betrayal', *The Guardian* (17 September 2014).
- [9] James Forsyth, 'The Unionists Have Been Too Afraid to Make a Proper Case', *The Spectator* (13 September 2014).
- [10] Tom Nairn, 'The Twilight of the British State', *New Left Review* 1/101-2 (February-April 1977), 59-60; *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-nationalism* (Second edition, London: Verso, 1981), 89-90.
- [11] Fintan O'Toole, 'Forget Braveheart, Kilts and Tribal Nationalism, This is about Democracy', *The Guardian* (13 September 2014).
- [12] Pauline Bryan, 'Powers for Political Change', *Class, Nation and Socialism: the Red Paper on Scotland 2014*, edited by Pauline Bryan and Tommy Kane (Glasgow: Glasgow Caledonian University Archives, 2013), 193.
- [13] David Denver, James Mitchell, Charles Pattie and Hugh Bochel, *Scotland Decides: the Devolution Issue and the Scottish Referendum* (London: Routledge, 2000), 116-119.
- [14] Paul Hutcheon, 'The Growth of the Yes Movement', *The Sunday Herald* (21 September 2014).
- [15] Willie Sullivan, *The Missing Scotland: Why over a Million Scots Choose Not to Vote and What it Means for Our Democracy* (Edinburgh: Luath Books, 2014), 19-20.
- [16] Suki Sangha and David Jamieson, 'The Radical Independence Campaign', *RS21 2* (Autumn 2014), 29.
- [17] Lesley Riddoch, 'A Radical and Unexpected Shift Place in Scots has Taken Place...Perhaps as Significant as the Big Vote Itself. People Power has Triumphed', *The Sunday Herald* (14 September 2014).
- [18] See, for example, Jonathan Freedland, 'If Britain Loses Scotland it Will Feel Like an Amputation', *The Guardian* (5 September 2014).
- [19] Kenyon Wright, *The People Say Yes; the Making of Scotland's Parliament* (Glendaruel: Argyll Press, 1997), 263.
- [20] Colin Barker, 'Empowerment and Resistance: "Collective Effervescence" and Other Accounts', in *Transforming Politics: Power and Resistance*, edited by Paul Bagguley and Jeff Hearn (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 25, 26.

- [21] George Kerevan, 'Vote's Biggest Loser is Scottish Labour', *The Scotsman* (20 September 2014).
- [22] Fred Dews, 'Lord George Robertson: "Forces of Darkness Would Love Scottish Split from United Kingdom"', *Brookings Now*, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/broo...>
- [23] See, for example, Simon Johnson, 'Britain's Enemies Will "Exploit Scottish Independence to Cut UK Power"', *The Telegraph* (17 October 2012).
- [24] Stephens, 'The World is Saying No to Scottish Separation'.
- [25] 'UK RIP?', *The Economist* (13 September 2014).
- [26] Noel McAdam, 'Sinn Fein Sympathy for Scottish Yes Vote, but It Won't Take Sides', *Belfast Telegraph* (2 September 2014).
- [27] James Maxwell, 'Scottish Independence: the View from Belfast', 2 July 2012, <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/p...>
- [28] Colin Kidd, 'Reflections on the Independence Referendum', *London Review of Books* (11 September 2014), 14. The way in which the Kidd personalises the Yes argument as an expression of Salmond's will is typical of No supporters. 'Meanwhile, the English, even those who are inclined to support the Union, are increasingly wondering if they want to tolerate much more of this [i.e. Salmond's behaviour]', harrumphed Ed Smith: 'Salmond may wink at the gallery and get a laugh—but would you trust his judgement in a crisis?', *New Statesman* (5-11 September 2014), 52.
- [29] Tom Gordon, 'One Year on: Will Better Together Change Their Tactics?', *The Sunday Herald* (23 June 2013).
- [30] *The Labour Party in Scotland, Ambition for Scotland* (Glasgow: Scottish Labour Party, 2001), 11.
- [31] Seamus Milne, 'Salmond's Scotland won't be an Escape from Britain', *The Guardian* (11 September 2014). See also Aditya Chakraborty, 'A Go-Along Scottish Economy Would be Viable but Would it be Any Better?', *The Guardian* (16 September 2014). Similar arguments were made by one of the few Marxist political economists to address the issue. See Michael Roberts, 'Scotland: Yes or No?', <http://thenextrecessuion.wordpress....>
- [32] Ben Jackson, 'The Break-up of Britain: the Left and Scottish Nationalism', *Renewal*, vol. 22, nos 1/2 (2014), 20-21.
- [33] George Galloway, 'Just Say Naw...': an Evening with George Galloway (Glasgow: Respect, 2014), [3].
- [34] Tim Shipman and Jason Allardyce, 'Yes Leads in Scots Poll Shock', *The Sunday Times* (7 September 2014); Sarah Neville and Clive Cookson, 'Ruling Elite Aghast as Union Wobbles', *Financial Times* (12 September 2014).
- [35] Severin Carrell, 'Scottish Independence: TNS Poll finds Single Point Separates Yes and No', *The Guardian* (8 September 2014).
- [36] Kiran Stacey, George Parker, Mure Dickie and Beth Rigby, 'Scottish Referendum: How Complacency Nearly Lost a United Kingdom', *Financial Times* (19 September 2014).
- [37] Judith Duffy, 'An Explosive Breach of the Rules: Salmond Blasts Treasury as its BBC Email is Exposed', *The Sunday Herald* (14 September 2014).
- [38] 'Rise of the Ayes', *The Economist* (13 September 2014), 30.
- [39] Magnus Gardham, 'Brown's Plea: Vote No for the Sake of Our Children', *The Guardian* (18 September 2014); Nicholas Watt, 'A Scottish Plea and Scottish Play as Brown takes to Stage', *The Herald* (18 September 2014).

The social movement for independence and the crisis of the British state

- [40] George Monbiot, 'A Yes Vote in Scotland would Unleash the Most Dangerous Thing of All—Hope', *The Guardian* (9 September 2014).
- [41] Allan Massie, 'In Truth, the SNP were Lamentable'; Andrew Whitaker, 'Labour's Big Beasts "Hauled No Camp Back from Brink"'; both in *The Scotsman* (20 September 2014).
- [42] Andrew Rawnsley, *The End of the Party: the Rise and Fall of New Labour* (London: Allen Lane, 2010), 476.
- [43] Tim Adams, 'It Wasn't a Raucous Crowd at Gretna Green. Then Again, Silent Majorities Rarely Are', *The Observer* (21 September 2014).
- [44] Comparable figures for Yes voters were: disaffection with Westminster politics (74%), the NHS (54%), tax and public spending (33%) and oil (20%).
- [45] Sam Wetherell, 'Exit Stage Right: the Case Against Scottish Independence', *Jacobin*, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/09/...>
- [46] Neil Davidson, *The Origins of Scottish Nationhood* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 90-127.
- [47] Eric J Hobsbawm in conversation with Antonio Polito, *The New Century*, (London: Abacus, 2000), 115. For a detailed discussion of 'majority disengagement', see Peter Mair, *Ruling in the Void: the Hollowing of Western Democracy* (London: Verso, 2013), 17-44
- [48] Ewen MacAskill, 'Buoyant Salmond Compares Vote to South Africa's Freedom Election', *The Guardian* (10 September 2014).
- [49] ordashcroftpolls.com/2014/09/scotland-voted/; <http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net...>
- [50] Jessica Elgot, 'Why Are So Many Scots From Ethnic Minorities Voting Yes?', *The Huffington Post* (14 June 2014), <http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/201...>
- [51] John Mellon, 'Class Divisions and the Scottish Referendum', <http://futureukandscotland.ac.uk/bl...>
- [52] Andrew Gilligan, 'Small Firms Making Big Claims for Scottish Independence', *The Telegraph* (31 August 2014).
- [53] It is also worth noting that Labour-supporting commentators fawned over leading capitalists, particularly Wood, who criticised the Yes campaign. See, for a particularly egregious example of this type of grovelling, see Catherine McLeod, 'There is Only One Real Team Scotland', *The Herald* (10 September 2014).
- [54] Personal communication (9 October 2014).
- [55] Mark Duffley and Christopher McLean, '35 Years of Scottish Attitudes towards Independence', *The Times* (15 March 2012).
- [56] Robert Worcester and Mark Duffley, 'Why it Hard to See Much Hope for Salmond and His Political Dream', *The Times* (9 May 2013).
- [57] Colin Kidd, 'After the Referendum', *London Review of Books*, vol. 36, no. 19 (9 October 2014), 20.
- [58] Mick Brown, 'After Scotland Votes No, the Kingdom is still United, but uneasily so', *The Sunday Telegraph* (20 September 2014).
- [59] Stephen Low, 'Remember "Class over Nation"', *Scottish Left Review* 83 (October 2014), 14.
- [60] Iain S Bruce, 'United Against a War on the Poor', *The Sunday Herald* (5 October 2014).
- [61] Kevin McKenna, 'How Can You Console a Heartbroken and Angry Daughter? You Can't', *The Observer* (21 September 2014).

The social movement for independence and the crisis of the British state

[62] Brian Wilson, 'Labour Must Fight on the Social Issues', *The Scotsman* (20 September 2014).

[63] Allan Brogan, 'Out with the Old: in with the New?', *Scottish Left Review* 83 (October 2014), 7.

[64] Will Hutton, 'After the Scottish Referendum—David Cameron's Attempt to Manipulate the Constitution is crudely Cynical', *The Observer* (21 September 2014). Apparently the Tories fail to realise what the 'real problem at the heart of British government' is: 'the British state, feudal in its origins, remain feudally centralised even in the 21st century'. The myth that the British state is some peculiarly archaic formation involves confusing form (the Monarchy, the House of Lords, etc.) and content (how well it actually serves the interests of the British capitalist class). In fact, the British state is one of the most brilliantly successful, endlessly adaptive states in the history of capitalism—as it has just reminded us yet again.

[65] Murray J. Pittock, *The Road to Independence? Scotland since the Sixties* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 87.

[66] Gerry Hassan, 'We Are One Scotland: Anatomy of a Referendum', *One Kingdom* (27 September 2014), <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourki...>

[67] Iain MacWhirter, 'Trouble if Austerity is Heaped on Austerity', *The Herald* (30 September 2014).

[68] 'The More Power in Britain is Devolved, the Faster Tax Revenues Race to the Bottom', *The Observer* (20 September 2014).

[69] See, for example, Andrew Whitaker, 'Gordon Brown backs Federalism in Event of No Vote', *The Scotsman* (15 August 2014).

[70] Timothy Garten Ash, 'We Need a Federal Britain in a Confederal Europe', *The Guardian* (22 September 2014); Bryan, 'Powers for Political Change', 194-197; David Torrance, *Britain Rebooted: Scotland in a Federal Union* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2014).

[71] 'Sir John Major's Ditchley Foundation Speech—the Full Transcript on Devolution', <http://www.betternation.org/2011/07...> Thanks to Jim Slaven for bringing this speech to my attention.

[72] W. Elliot Bulmer, 'Scotland's Future After the Referendum', *Herald Scotland*, 27 September 2014, <http://www.heraldsotland.com/comme...>

[73] Magnus Gardham, 'Sturgeon sets out SNP Stall with Demand for Devo Max', *The Herald* (11 October 2014).

[74] Adam Tomkins, 'The Union can't Withstand English nationalism', *New Statesman* (26 September–2 October 2014), 52.