

European issues

n°324

16<sup>th</sup> September 2014

# The Scottish Parliament through the prism of the upcoming referendum on Scotland Independence.

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## Abstract :

For several decades, as the construction of the European Union has unfolded, we have witnessed the emergence and revival of regional aspiration to independence: Catalonia, Basque Country, Flanders, Corsica, and Lombardy all desire autonomy or even independence. Scotland is foremost among them. It is true that 300 years ago, Scotland was a sovereign and independent country. It fought for a long time against the English to keep its freedom. As far back as 1291, the King of England Edward I went into Scotland with his army in order to subjugate his unruly neighbour, without counting on the fierce resistance of the Scottish people. The first war of independence occurred from 1296 to 1306. William Wallace was one of the legendary heroes. He fought against the English occupation as the leader of the patriots before finally succumbing. In 1314, Robert Bruce, leading the Scottish army, fought against the English troops in Bannockburn under Edward II. Then, the second war of independence followed from 1332 to 1357. The English would not stop fighting to take control of Scotland. But they faced the resistance of its inhabitants. In 1603, England and Scotland were first joined by the so-called 'Union of the Crown', when, following the death of Queen Elizabeth I without an heir, James Stuart, James VI of Scotland succeeded to the throne of England as James I. However, the countries remained two separate kingdoms with the same monarch. Finally in 1706 and 1707, the Acts of Union reunited both kingdoms to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain. Despite the rebellions of 1715 and 1745, this led to the merger of the Scottish Parliament and the English Parliament to form the British Parliament which sits in Westminster. Nevertheless, throughout those three centuries, the Scottish people many times expressed under different forms their desire to govern themselves. They managed to seize the historical occasion when it occurred.

Indeed, on 15th October 2012, British Prime Minister David Cameron signed an agreement authorising the organisation of a referendum on Scottish independence that should take place in September 2014. At the end of this historical consultation, Scotland could therefore leave the United Kingdom and recover its total independence. Joined since 1707 to the English Crown, Scotland has nevertheless enjoyed a great deal of autonomy since 1997. But under pressure from Alex Salmond, current Scottish Prime Minister and leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), and in spite of much reluctance, David Cameron finally accepted the running of this referendum. It is true that by electing the Scottish National Party with an absolute majority during the last elections in 2011, Scottish voters were sure to obtain the opportunity to express

their will for independence. Scottish nationalists have demanded that this referendum take place in 2014 for the 700th anniversary of the victory against the English at Bannockburn (18th September 1314). As we can imagine, this choice is not by chance. On 18th September 2014, Scottish people will have to answer the question: 'Should Scotland become an independent country?' It will be followed by another question known as 'devo-max', or maximum devolution<sup>[1]</sup> which in case of a 'no' vote would prevent it from total defeat.

England and Scotland have shared a common parliament since 1707. But the 'Scotland Act' voted in 1998 decided the creation of a Scottish Parliament legitimised by a referendum in 1997. The Edinburgh Parliament initiated the referendum project on the

1. Maximum devolution or 'devo-max' is a proposal which would enable Scots to maintain a full economic independence from the UK and over their own government while remaining in the UK.

independence. The procedure is perfectly democratic. It is therefore suitable to analyze closely what constitutes the origin of this new institution.

Strikingly enough, Westminster is the actual place from which the whole idea of a referendum originates. Just like in France, in London, the executive power sometimes overrides the will of Parliament. Decentralization, the use of unelected experts, the rise of judicial power, and the over-personalisation of political life have become realities. This situation feeds the dislike and mistrust of the middle classes towards the political elite. A gap is thus widening between people's representatives and the people.

That is why the representative democracies try to answer the wish for increased voter participation. This diagnosis, which is shared by several observers, must be counterbalanced by the return to a participative democracy and procedures compensating for the defaults of the representative democracy. The British parliamentary system did not escape from those criticisms. The balance of power between executive and legislative power has evolved to the detriment of the second. In fact, the Scottish parliamentary model has been conceived in reaction to the weakness of the British parliamentary model. It was meant to be a concrete example of a reinvented democracy. Scotland prides itself on a new type of parliament functioning in an opposite way to Westminster's.

Indeed, in the case of majoritarian democracy which prevails in London, the winner of the elections sees himself taking power. Parliament is a place of confrontations, conflicts between political parties, between the government and the opposition. Besides, the first past the post ballot system<sup>[2]</sup>, which is very disproportional to the actual votes cast, favours the lasting preservation of two big parties. According to critics, this bipolarisation harms the real expression of the needs of the British population, which increasingly reacts by large-scale abstention. A climate of conflict and the absence of consensus are the prominent features of this parliamentary model. Aware of those dysfunctions, former United Kingdom Prime Minister Gordon Brown denounced 'the old politics' and declares:

'I do believe that Britain needs a new type of politics which embraces everyone in the nation and not just a select few, a politics that is built on consensus and not division, a politics that is built on engaging with people and not excluding them, and perhaps most of all a politics that draws upon the widest range of talents and expertise, not narrow circles of power.'

This new concept suggests the increased participation of the largest section of the population into political life. This participation could be of the consensual type rather than conflictual. Some reformist observers severely condemn the fact that British democracy has become a 'parody of democracy'. This concept of a 'new policy' was warmly welcomed by the people in the 1990s. Especially among those who committed themselves into creating a Scottish autonomous parliament. For them, devolution represented the appropriate occasion to implement the principles of this new policy.

For all those reasons, Scotland serves as testing ground for multiple reforms; reforms that some people would like to see one day applied to Westminster. The Scottish reformists therefore put forward the role that Scottish parliament could play in the British democratic renewal and highlighted its experimental role. The creation of the Scottish parliament therefore appeared as an opportunity for experimentation in new ways of conducting politics. It was an opportunity to integrate innovative forms of participation and to introduce new methods of working. The challenge was to find concrete, applicable and realistic solutions, enabling the reform of the old parliamentary model, but also to end the domination of the executive over the legislative. The Scottish people opted for the mixed ballot known as the Additional member system.

According to this hybrid model, the voter is attributed two votes: the first within the framework of the majority vote (majoritarian scrutiny), and the second within the framework of a proportional representation. This prevents the election of one-party and all-mighty governments. The parties are obliged to find consensual solutions and to collaborate to reach a decision. This way, all the representatives feel involved in the decision making process.

2. The first past the post ballot system is a one round election pattern won by the candidate with more votes than any others without the necessity of an absolute majority.

The Scottish parliament created in 1999 was meant to be a new governance model with a new component: a participative approach. It was meant to represent the principle of popular sovereignty and had the ambition to restore a relationship of trust between the government and the citizens. Most of the citizens recall the fact that the population has been sovereign, as mentioned in Scottish constitutional rights, for several centuries. The constitutional treaty of George Buchanan, written in 1579, attests to it. This principle is thus opposed to the English tradition of parliamentary sovereignty. In Scotland before the Union, the Scottish Church and the Convention of Royal Boroughs had the power to govern too. During the inauguration of the new building housing the Scottish parliament, in Holyrood, politicians insisted on the four founding principles of the new model of governance: accessibility, responsibility of the Parliament to the people, power sharing and equal opportunities. The architecture itself has been thought to facilitate conversation, hence the exchange: 'We must keep the conversation going with the citizens of Scotland. The Parliament belongs to them, not the politicians'

May we add that the edifice, delivered three years later than expected, costs ten times more than the expected budget. This led some electors to doubt the capacity of its representatives to run the country.

We may wonder what the current situation is, some thirteen years later. In fact, the parliament and its representative essence managed to integrate innovating participation forms, especially the implementation of the e-democracy. Some people argue that it is the best ever conceived. It could even represent the avant-garde of the future European institutions. In any case, it represents the principle of the popular sovereignty inscribed in Scottish constitutional rights. As one of the major figures of Scottish nationalism declared: 'The first and greatest reason for creating a Scottish Parliament is that the people of Scotland wants and deserves democracy'

Participation is at the heart of the Scottish institutional approach. The ambition is to open political life to

the largest number of people. The reason for this 'new political life' is the involvement of the citizens in the decision-making processes. To that end, the Edinburgh parliament adopted different methods to encourage citizens to get involved in political life. It always propounds the much needed merger between the institutions which provide information and services and the citizens for whom this range of services is destined. The latter aimed to engage and nurture a dialogue between civil society and governance. As for the SNP, it is keen to make the citizens intervene in the drafting of the legislative texts. The essential factor is first to be listening to what the people has to say, as claimed by the Scottish parliament president, Tricia Marwick since 11th May 2011: 'A place where the ears of the politicians are open to the voices of the people'

The most innovative measure is the system of public petitions. The Public Petitions Committee examines the complaints and suggestions which are addressed to it. This committee is a way of enabling the citizens to get involved in parliamentary work. This procedure has been modernised: it is nowadays possible to petition through electronic means. Napier University Tele-Democracy centre manages the e-petitions. The Public Petitions Committee which is in charge of examining those petitions constitutes in some ways the entrance door to the parliamentary process. It also displays the range of services for the attention of the citizens. Concerning the accessibility and the participation, the report is thus positive. The promise taken seems to be upheld.

Nevertheless, the Carman Report published in October 2006 expresses a more reserved opinion. The procedure is mostly used by citizens already really involved in political life. A certain number of citizens nevertheless remain indifferent or resistant to the possibilities that are offered to them. May we add that pressure groups are at the origin of 25% of the petitions? Nevertheless, 50% of the petitions come from individual initiatives. In this context, laws are thus the fruit of a long exchange process and cooperation between civil society and politicians. Participation remains the central preoccupation of the Scottish parliament.

In spite of this, progress concerning accessibility, responsibility and the promotion of equality is real. Multiple initiatives are taken to motivate citizens who are not engaged in the political debate. They can, among other things, follow the parliamentary debates on the radio or on TV. Information meetings for secondary school pupils take place at the Parliament or in schools. While the library network, entitled Partner Library Network, offers the general public multiple publications, studies and works on the different problems debated at the Parliament.

It is worth noticing that women's accession to Parliament has been facilitated thanks to the adoption of office hours: the representatives' timetable is now from 2.30pm to 5.30pm on Monday, and from 9.30 to 5.30 from Tuesday to Thursday and on Friday morning. Moreover, elected representatives' holidays are taken during school holidays which addressed some long-held demands from feminist groups. Thus women's representation at the parliament has been improved. Progress is less evident for power sharing. In the parliament, the commission in charge of this subject estimates that power sharing as the potential for the population to intervene in the decisional process turns out to be unrealistic. This desire for a fair distribution of power tinged with populism could be at the origin of a gap between the citizens' expectations and the concrete decisions taken by the policymakers. Sharing power between government, parliament and people must in fact be conceived as the chance given to the civil society to play a more important role in Scotland's governance. Thus, decisions are not taken by the people itself but indeed by its representatives. The latter, when they belong to small parties can nevertheless get a significant hearing thanks to the implementation of an office which manages the parliamentary time. Besides, if they are supported by 11 deputies, they can make a proposition of individual initiative law. They have preparation time to ask questions about subjects on the agenda. It enables the confrontation of points of view and the reaching of a consensus. The participative approach implemented in Scotland would thus be a matter of the democracy of influence: citizens can influence the decisional process but not directly the decision itself. Scottish people did also try

to implement the concept of sharing the power through pre-legislative consultations.

But those procedures revealed themselves to be hard to attain. Indeed, civil society's partners had neither the time nor the skills to answer the multiple inherent inquiries in this kind of operations. In spite of all those initiatives, the majority of the bills put before the Scottish parliament are law projects of governmental origin, which dampen the original enthusiasm. In fact, the Scottish parliament combines the elements linked to the representative democracy model with those linked to the participative model. Public petitions, public meetings, the use of electronics and other innovations were meant to make the citizens' voice heard and to encourage their effective participation. These initiatives illustrate the will of the parliament to create a culture of active citizenship. Thus, the parliamentary commissions have to work on involving citizens in the development of policies. These innovations have aroused an undeniable enthusiasm in Scotland. The expected changes were huge and often unrealisable. After some years, the Scottish moderated their expectations. They learnt how to make more reasonable and more realistic choices. However, they are nonetheless strongly attached to their parliament.

The Scottish Parliament is composed of 129 elected representatives. In 2001, it counted 56 members of the Labour party, 35 nationalists, 18 conservatives and 17 liberal-democrats. Among them, 73 were elected through the traditional system and 56 through the proportional system. In May 2011, the Scottish National Party won 69 seats at the parliament out of 129. Contrary to all expectations, the SNP thus held an undeniable advantage after being credited with 45% of the votes. It finds itself in a very favourable position to introduce its own policies. The assembly has a fixed mandate of 4 years. It cannot be dissolved, except by itself. Interestingly enough, the Scottish parliament votes only on laws concerning internal affairs: health, education, agriculture, transport, culture, accommodation etc. Some prerogatives remain to Westminster: foreign policy, defence, finances, jobs, and industrial policies on power for example. Thus, the Scottish parliament can only legislate on devolved

matters. Strangely enough, Scottish representatives can also sit at the English House of Commons and thus vote on the laws concerning England. But reciprocity does not exist and it seems to be an aberration in English people's opinion. This problem known as the West Lothian Question is always a controversial subject. The country enjoys a large autonomy. But a large fringe of the electorate would like to go a step further and aspires to independence. Alex Salmond, currently Scotland Prime Minister and leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP), is campaigning in this purpose. The question is hard to settle. All the more since at the beginning, the Scottish National Party avoided producing serious studies to nurture the dialogue, deliberately maybe or to keep room for manoeuvre. Nevertheless, the debate rages on. The difficulty is to weigh or measure the effects of the independence on the citizens' standard of living, on jobs, finances, economy or the defence of the country. The major questions aroused by the referendum are also about the future relations with the United Kingdom, with the European Union and with NATO. For the basic voter it is difficult to get a realistic understanding of these subjects. Admittedly, public meetings, television debates and information communicated by the press or on the internet can contribute to enlightening the voter. Nevertheless, it can be abused by populist discourses, blinded by the nationalist passion or introduced in error by petty demagogues. According to a survey published in 2011, 38% of the Scottish electorate would vote in favour of the independence if asked, while in January 2012 40% would make this choice. The floating voters were 17%. Besides, the idea of independence without participation in the EU only gathers a low level of support. Concerning the return to the situation before 1999, it interests only a very low percentage of electors. The most striking example is a recent survey published in England which reveals that a very large percentage of the English public wants to see an independent Scotland. It seems that on both sides, the union is not in keeping with current tastes. To circumvent the Scottish nationalism, unionists – unionists to be understood, here, as the movement favouring the membership of GB- have tried to put forward the concept of a 'Unitarian Britishness', that is to say a civil identity supposed to be above national

particularities. This will of promoting Britishness only met with modest support. In Scotland, resistance to Thatcherism has been organised around national identity which has been associated with the social democrat thought. The Nation has therefore been reinvented under this concept. Indeed, every Scot remembers that the Edinburgh parliament opposed the planned privatisation of health services, the reduction of social benefits and budget cuts in the education field. It notably introduced free prescriptions and removed the university tuition fees. From this point of view, nationalists have a social democrat policy to which Scottish citizens subscribed. Unionists did not manage to demonstrate that devolution had a negative effect on the living standards of the population. Thus, Scottish nationality has been reinforced and partially reinvented around social and economical questions.

In this vast and crucial debate, questions about the Scottish economic viability and the eventual integration of the country to the EU often return to the fore on both sides (and it is fair enough, since the stakes are high). Independence partisans and its opponents argue against each other. For a long time, it seems that voters were predominantly hostile to independence. But recent surveys shows that the "yes" could be ahead. Things can evolve again. What could complicate the reflections is the perspective of another referendum expected in 2015: 'Should Great Britain exit the EU?'

If the UK were to leave the EU, what would be the consequences for Scotland which would opt for its staying in the United Kingdom? According to the Financial Times which published a survey: 53% of British people wanted a way out of the EU. But if Great Britain remains in the EU, what would be the consequences for a Scotland which would have opted for the independence? There are many hypotheses that it is reasonable to contemplate in order to measure their impact on Scottish society. Will basic voters be able to conduct an informed analysis and above all will they have access to all the necessary elements of information in order to make decisions. This is far from obvious. It suggests an intense pedagogic work with the citizens which is not much compatible with the passionate overflowing raised by the vote's stake. The

financial and economic crisis which nowadays rages in Europe can influence the vote: in the uncertainty, electors risk to choose the status quo. But the modern tools that the Scottish parliament acquired should contribute to enlighten citizens and to ensure their participation.

Indeed, problems generated by the accession of Scotland to full independence are not easy to settle. For example, what would become of the Clyde submarine base where numbers of buildings are grouped together and the British nuclear dissuasion force, which provides much local employment? Great Britain would not lose its atomic power status for the benefit of Scotland. What would be the relationship with NATO? Which defence policy to choose? How to guarantee the security of the oil installations in North Sea against terrorist threat?

The effects of Scotland's secession on the British army would be devastating: having a budget already reduced, its personnel would be amputated of 20%. Its credibility would be challenged. In a totally different field, namely money, debates are lively. In case of a victory of the 'yes', nationalists would like to keep the pound sterling. But London is opposed to it, putting forward the current turbulence that shakes the euro zone as evidence:

'Admittedly, Greece and Germany have common money but that's all' ironically claims the English press. Integrated to the EU, Scotland would be dependent on a foreign currency controlled by the European Central Bank. What would be the expected benefits of such a choice? Economists remain sceptical. Paradoxically, nationalists refuse to insure the liabilities of the Royal Bank of Scotland which collapsed in 2008 and faces big problems. The last option would be to create a brand new currency: which would be exposed to the rating agencies and would imply loans at higher interest rates. As for opting for the Euro, this is not the right time. To London, this secession could confirm its loss of influence in the concert of the nations and would compromise its place at the UN Security Council.

Scottish nationalists rely on North Sea oil and gas resources to sustain their economy and the country's independence. Those resources are partially monopolised by London according to them. 'It's Scotland's oil' is the most popular slogan in Edinburgh. Unquestionably, the North Sea's oil

and gas reserves are an asset for the Scottish economy. Oil represents approximately 15% of the Scottish government's total income. The SNP estimates up to £1000 billion sterling the value of this underground treasure which corresponds to 40% of the unexploited reserves. Some people argue that the reserves will be drained out around 2035 and already wonder about the 'after oil era'. In London, some Members of Parliament underscore that the independent Scotland will have to share those oil reserves and pay its debt part which nowadays sits at £1100 billion. Nationalists agree to cooperate if the debt is calculated proportionally to its population which represents 10% of the United Kingdom's. Yet the wealth of a country is not proportional to its population as retorts London, which again expressed its disagreement. Moreover, how would the oil companies react to those changes? Nobody knows. What advantages could they find in a different context? What fiscal advantages could the oil companies expect to benefit from the Scottish side and from the British side? What would become the exploration licences obtained and expected to be valid for a 30 year period? Besides, what will be the future of the British nuclear plants installed on Scottish territory? Nationalists also evoke their desire for an institutional and widespread use of renewable energy from the wind farm and tidal barrages, but to this day, everything remains to be done in those sectors. Especially since a large part of the investments in this sector comes from London.

According to Alex Salmond, this potential energy production of wind turbines and tidal power could raise Scotland to the 6th rank of the world richest countries. The future will tell us whether it is a utopia. Anyway, with a population of 5.2 millions inhabitants and its real assets, Scotland can claim to be doing as well as Latvia, Croatia or Denmark. Scotland possesses a real potential. Yet, can those complex problems be settled with the simple help of the population? Does the population run the risk of being manipulated by experts on this matter? During this crucial debate, could communication turn into simple propaganda? The risk is high as we can predict.

Moreover, national whisky industry admittedly brings other benefits such as tourism for example. But is it sufficient to insure the prosperity of a new state? Scotland can obviously be proud of dynamic sectors: bank and financial services, transport, fishing, biotechnology, electronics and aerospace.

Additionally, Scotland chose a development based on the knowledge economy. Indeed, Scotland has 14 universities and a lot of renowned university institutes. Scotland relies on research and thus tries to attract students, researchers and foreign investors. Its dynamic economy remains nevertheless vulnerable as the black gold of oil: its production decline cannot be enough on its own to insure the country's prosperity and development, especially because its price is really volatile. Nationalists evoke the model of prosperous Norway, whose territory is as big as Scotland's and also benefits from important oil and gas reserves. Unquestionably, economic stakes are at the heart of the discussions. But it is first and foremost the domain of specialists and experts. The population is more inclined to take into account emotional arguments. This is understandable but it can lead to unreasonable decisions. Parliament must therefore mobilise all the means possible so that a calm debate can be held without unwanted propaganda, populism or demagoguery. The Nationalists estimate that Scotland finances the rest of the United Kingdom and consequently want to get out of it while unionists believe the total opposite. Many voters are persuaded that the Union has a negative effect on Scotland's economic situation. Over 20% of them share this point of view.

Besides, 31% of people consider that Scotland would be better off, economically speaking, if it was independent. On the other side, convinced that Scots take advantage of the legendary generosity from London, 53% of Englishmen are in favour of Scotland's independence. Fortunately, at any time population can be alerted through the internet when there is a slip-up or misleading information. That was the case when rumours circulated, started by the unionists, that the secession would cut off Scottish people from their parents living in England for example. We have to bear in mind that 49% of Scottish people, according to a survey published by YouGov in June 2010, think that Scotland would become independent in 20 years, but not for the moment. It thus seems to reinforce the hypothesis of a victory of the partisans of the maximal devolution. Another survey reveals that people are not interested in the visible attributes of independence, especially by the defence and foreign affairs portfolios. On the other hand, they show themselves extremely attached to the questions concerning education, health and social security. The constant concern of the Scottish parliament is the welfare of its voters.

Another question was also raised during the numerous debates: the one concerning the relations with the EU. How to reconcile independence with the giving up of sovereignty in many areas which ensues from joining the EU? The equation is all the more difficult to settle in that, for decades, nationalists have been fighting to recover the full sovereignty of their country. The contradiction is obvious but it is overlooked by the partisans of independence. The Scottish National Party is in favour of independence from Europe, a formula which is at least sibylline. And this, when the eurosceptic British will maybe give their opinion in favour of independence from Europe. Those who consider themselves Scottish are more Europhile than the British. The SNP therefore managed to demonstrate that a pro European policy was compatible with the country's independence. According to SNP, European or EU membership could diminish the dependence towards union with the British. Nowadays, Scotland, for it belongs to Great Britain, receives European grants, particularly subsidies in order to restructure its economy and structural funds for its ports, airports, roads and bridges, let alone the direct aid to farming linked to the common agricultural policy. If Scotland becomes independent, it would have to negotiate its membership to the EU. If not, it will lose Europe's financial support. As we can perceive, the scenarios are multiple and the stakes are considerable in each case. If Great Britain leaves the EU and if Scotland rejects independence, it will still depend on London's financial aid but will go on without the help from Brussels. If Great Britain does not leave the EU, and Scotland separates from the UK and considers joining the EU –consideration must be given to the unanimity rule which prevails in Brussels for any new EU membership application- England then could oppose Scotland's entrance within the EU.

Since the Maastricht Treaty (1992), Europe deals directly with autonomous regions. The regions have representation in Brussels and do lobbying at the European Commission. Independent Scotland would only be able to exercise a proportional influence. The SNP expressed the idea that Scotland could integrate into a 'prosperity belt' constituted by Ireland, Finland, and Iceland. Its adversaries did not forget to make them aware that it rather was the 'belt of insolvency', alluding to the serious financial difficulties that Dublin and Reykjavik have experienced. They therefore highlighted the absence of a clear social and economic model in the SNP's project. In their propositions, the nationalists

promised to lower the professional tax and in the same time, to broaden and improve public services: veritable tour de force. Those questions require loads of information, discussions, and different opinions. How in these conditions not take into account the specialists' opinions and experts' recommendations?

We can see limits of the participative democracy, especially as the opponents of independence or its partisans can gloss over some problems or data or on the contrary, present them in an exaggerated way in an attempt to frighten the voters. It is obvious that in the case that we are interested in, an enlightened choice requires specific information and precise skills that are not common knowledge. Would young people aged 16-17 years old and who will be able to vote for the first time be able to make a decision understanding all the consequences?

Nevertheless, it is fair enough that experts display their arguments by participating in debates so that finally the sovereign population has the last word. Nevertheless, those who blindly believe in participative democracy should have the lucidity to ask themselves two questions: can the population debate in a reasoned manner? Does the population want to play a larger part in the political life than they currently do? This remains to be seen. We all know the verdict will be on 18th September 2014. In case of the victory of the 'yes', Queen Elizabeth II will remain the Head of State humorously underlined Alex Salmond, a convinced monarchist. It is true that today independence does not have the same significance it had in the 19th century. The debate should be about the degree of autonomy. In reality, independence is a blurred

concept, which can take different forms. The SNP has indeed published lots of reports aiming at diluting the independence idea to better express the idea of the sovereignty-association dear to the Quebecois. And possible integration into the EU does not make the idea of independence any clearer or more understandable. We could talk about this question of the independence in the interdependence according to Edgar Faure's formula. But nobody will think about contesting the legitimacy of this referendum and the voters' choice. This is the grandeur of democracy. More than anywhere else, the Scottish parliament will have tried to fill in the democratic deficit observed even within the EU. In this, it will have been exemplary. Anyway, the result of this referendum will be followed with deep interest in Europe by the Flemish and Catalans, who, in case of the success of those wanting independence, would be interested in following the Scottish example. The Kingdom would then be really and truly disunited, Wallonia would be an orphan and Spain would be deprived of its richest region. Western Europe would then peacefully experience the nationalist spirit-fuelled domino reaction that occurred in Yugoslavia in the early 1990's. A whole new map of Europe could be drawn. But the existence of the Edinburgh parliament should enable to make a considered, calm and responsible choice.

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