Devolution or revolution? From the rise of the individual to the supremacy of the community

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PREO

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Identités nationales, identités régionales

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« Je refuse de me laisser consigner à l'intérieur de l'une ou de l'autre des deux communautés comme le voudraient certains hommes politiques. Et je ne prendrai aucune des routes qu'ils ont fléchées à mon intention. Je vais rester ici. Tout ce qui passe et repasse sur ces chemins, je veux qu'il passe par moi. »

Glendinning, Robin (1996). « Le pays de mes ancêtres » (trans.

C. Ianco & C. Hewlett), in : Snowdown, Peter, Ed., *Irlandes parallèles* (*Deux histoires, deux destins, une attente*), Paris : Autrement, 95.

1   As Michael Tatham explains in his most interesting CRECIB article (Tatham 2006 : 41), devolution of power to Scotland and Wales is no marginal adjustment. Quite the opposite. As a matter of fact, the setting up of a Scottish Parliament and – to a lesser extent – of a Welsh Assembly amounts to a real sea change in constitutional terms. Not only has the relationship between Westminster and the so-called Celtic periphery been redefined, but the 1998 Wales and Scotland Acts have also introduced a form of quasi-federalism[1] into British government, since Scotland and Wales now enjoy a large measure of political and financial autonomy. Not to mention the impact of it all in the long run for England herself.

2   Crucially, if the most recent opinion polls carried out in Scotland are anything to go by, devolution may also have provided the Nationalists with the forum they need to launch their final attack on the British state and achieve their ultimate goal, which is their *raison d'être*, namely independence.

3   It is however probable that devolution has had other implications for Britain as a political entity. It is also, and crucially, a major U-turn in the way one approaches the questions of belonging, democratic rights and duties, national solidarity, i.e. the question of citizenship, which is what political nations are about. In order to answer the question I have used as a starting point to this paper, I will therefore first analyze the implications of the 1707 Union in terms of British citizenship, then explain why their logic eventually came under fire in an attempt to show to what extent devolution has been about imposing an altogether different vision whereby, within the UK, nationality has, in some cases, become a prerequisite for the right to have rights (in other words, individuals in Wales or Scotland now enjoy certain specific rights on account of their being Welsh or Scottish, not just because they are, like the English, citizens of a broader political union, i.e. Britain).

1. 1707 and all that

4   The 1707 political settlement which ensured Scotland would retain the most basic features of her civil society, was meant to be a bulwark against uniformity. Thus, Scotland would never be 'swallowed up' by England, her far larger and mightier neighbour, and would continue to exist as a more or less separate entity despite sharing power with the latter. In the long run though, things could not be that simple. Not, of course, on account of any law of historical inevitability, but simply as a result of major forces that, as it were, fed upon one another.

5   From the very start indeed, the British state rested, as it still does on the whole, on the liberal ideal that freedom starts with the individual and how much autonomy he or she can actually enjoy. As Monique Canto-Sperber has explained about (political) liberalism: 'Les libertés de posséder, d'entreprendre et d'échanger donnent accès aux conditions les plus concrètes de la liberté individuelle. Là où ces libertés sont absentes, il n'y a pas de société libre.' (2006 : 21) Achieving just this inevitably meant a rather high level of integration (economic, political and therefore, inevitably, cultural and social), and implied both the fact that the polity known as 'Britain' could not pre-exist, but was precisely the result of an on-going process, of constantly renewed interaction, going beyond a simple addition of Scotland and England / Wales, and the fact that being British was a prerequisite for true equality between Englishmen / Welshmen and Scots rather than a cunning plan for bringing to heel an entire territory, or for blotting out an entire culture.

6   This situation in fact, but quite logically, went hand-in-hand with changes Britain-wide over the modern and contemporary periods. If anything, the Industrial Revolution and the social environment it gave birth to encouraged relations (business, financial, intellectual, artistic, and so on), migrations, and therefore interaction in all directions, which is what a liberal economy is about, for better or for worse, so much so that the functional soon became the main form of organisation of, i.e. the hallmark of, (among others) British society. With pride of place given to interacting individuals, i.e. individual initiative,

human agency, the middle-tier between individual and state carefully preserved by the Treaty of Union was thereby regularly by-passed.

7   This does not mean that all parts of the British territory became identical with one another over time, but simply that life on the ground became more complex and therefore harder to define in exclusive (naturalistic) terms, whether physical, administrative, economic or cultural (see Frémont 1999 : 31-32, 36, 39, 56, 57, 117-118, 179, 191, 215-217 & 218). Social relations, indeed, are not established once and for all; they remain open and are subject to permanent recreation by members of the community who can always choose between acceptance of the rules and e.g. manipulation, interpretation or negotiation. Put differently, one may say that the singular is necessarily plural (Lahire 2006 : 65 & 66) because there can be no action in the social sphere without reaction, i.e. constant adaptation and adjustment to a context over which one can only have at best partial control (Warnier 1999 : 10).

8   As post-social historians have shown over the last fifteen years or so, people endow their own experiences and knowledge with specific meaning that then goes on to inform new experiences and create new forms of reaction, demands, solidarity, culture, and so on. The social context can therefore be nothing more than a material referent or support (Cabrera 2005 : 29, 33 & 44-48 e.g.). That is why sociologist Bruno Latour writes: '(la) grandeur (des modernes) vient d'avoir fait proliférer les hybrides (...). (...) L'humain est dans la délégation même, dans la passe, dans l'envoi, dans l'échange continu des formes.' (1991 : 182 & 189)

9   Although the letter of the 1707 Act, or Treaty, was fast becoming less relevant, this could hardly be seen as a step in the wrong direction since, again, it enhanced individual freedom, which is the true locus of power for a human being in any self-respecting democracy. However, the price to pay for real and lasting individual freedom, i.e. equal citizenship based on a formal equalizing of rights and duties, cut both ways: England was as much under pressure to deliver as Scotland.

10   Characteristically, resentment at the Union and its long-term logic was actually the more rampant in some quarters within England since nothing could be done about it except scathingly criticize the 'other', as illustrated by some comments made e.g. by the Honourable John

Byng (1743-1813), a high-ranking civil servant, who, writing in the late XVIIIth century, called Scotland 'some dirty country', and lamented the passing of the old order and the fact 'the Scotch have made *some* permanent inroads into this country' (1991 : 181 & 158).

11   It was in fact deemed common sense to try and avail oneself of the liberality of the centre, regardless of one's background. The very first editors of two of England's most famous periodicals e.g., *The Economist* and *The Spectator*, were Scottish. As a matter of fact, in the words of Richard Weight: 'British national identity was largely a Scottish creation, prompted by the need to convince ordinary Scots that England was a benign ally and not a rapacious predator. 'Rule Britannia' was written by a Scot, James Thompson, in 1740.' (2003 : 5) Hence, more generally, the following statement by Linda Colley: 'Scots like Watt do not seem to have regarded themselves as stooges of English cultural hegemony. Far from succumbing helplessly to an alien identity imposed by others, in moving south they helped construct what being British was all about.' (1992 : 125) Hence, too, the idea defended by French historian E. Halévy that Scotland literally conquered England (1937 : 158). A fine illustration of Scotland's long-term influence upon England is the fact there were no fewer than eight Scotsmen in the Cabinet in 2006.

12   Equal citizenship too had been one of the fruits of the annexation of Wales over 1536-1543, with interaction between England and Wales becoming the norm over time. By the early 1580s e.g., the increase in London's Welsh population was substantially higher than the general pattern of growth, with a whopping 340% rise since 1541, most incomers hailing from North Wales. Moreover, at least 8 Welshmen filled important London chaplaincies during the XVIth century, and the number of admissions of Welsh students to the four Inns of Court went from 3% to 5% over the 1580s-1590s (Griffith 2001 : 10-13 & 19-20), while Bristol offered alternative prospects to people from South Wales. In fact, the latter town's merchants' capital, which from the early XVIIIth century was primarily invested in the growing mining and metal industries of the Principality, was eventually to prove instrumental in the industrial take-off of South Wales (Minchinton 1976 : 304-305).

13   Later decades saw more of the same. In September 1811 e.g., the cit-izens of Bangor (North Wales) bestirred themselves immediately when they realized that Thomas Telford's proposal to Parliament for a new coach line between London and Ireland would simply have by-passed their city (Pritchard 1952 : 22 & 23, and Ingman 1952 : 37-38). The forces that were to alter the southern part of the Principality later on were rooted in a British context of social, economic, political and cultural changes. That part of the country would not be what it is today without the massive immigration from the western counties of England (Somerset, Devon) that characterized the 1890s-1900s (but also the preceding decades, as the Welsh population rocketed from some 585,000 in 1801 to 2.4 million by 1911) and definitively tipped the balance in favour of the English language.

14   The pace of interaction between Wales and England in fact has never slackened since then: in the mid-1980s e.g., it was estimated that there were as many as 35,000 Welsh speakers in London (Francis-Jones 1984 : 48), i.e. as many as there are in Cardiff today. While ac-cording to the 2001 Census, between 40 and 45% of the population of e.g. Conwy, Flintshire and Powys were people born in England (Drink-water & Blackaby 2004 : 39).

15   In short, as Keith Robbins has underlined:

> *Scotland and Wales were not 'absorbed' by 'England' in any simple fashion. The singularity of England was indeed to be found in its cul-tural diffuseness. The cohesion of Britain, in so far as it was attained, was not achieved by the simple imposition of 'England' upon Scotland and Wales. English identity was itself undergoing constant change during precisely the same period.*

16   That is why he went on to explain that when WWI broke out, Great Britain, though a special country, was a united one: 'a three-nation unit and a single unit.' (1989 : 11 & 184) Unsurprisingly, dual identities (British / Scottish e.g.) continue to be prevalent today (Rosie & Bond 2006, 156). A 1997 opinion poll showed that one in four Scots decided they were 'Scottish, not British', while one in three considered them-selves 'equally British and Scottish'.

17   Calling Britain a 'political artefact' then, as staunch devolutionists have done (Grieve & Ross 1988 : 6), is partly at least to misunderstand

the ins and outs of both the Union and the link between politics and freedom. It is strange that men and women who have made it their duty to enhance democracy should actually not celebrate what is good about a political arrangement that was meant, despite its highs and lows, to set individuals free, as it made their respective backgrounds relative, therefore paving the way for the recognition of equal rights regardless of nationality. Stranger still, in the 1960s-1990s, this is the very system they had in mind for Scotland (and Wales), as it was vital in their view to subsume the region's diversity under universality in the name of fairness.

18   Talking about fairness, and to come back to the Union, it must also be added that social progress in any one part of the country or town could only be a source of inspiration for all the others that would inevitably insist upon sharing the same rights. James Kellas e.g. has explained that 'British aspirations of 'equality-all-around" have always been of paramount importance in Scotland. 'Political man (there) stands on two legs, one Scottish and one British, and both are needed if he is to remain upright.' (1975 : 18) The level of wage increases for teachers e.g. (though negotiated separately for England and Scotland) is made comparable by demand, like the amount of road building or the level of subsidy to public transport. Besides, despite lower income levels in Scotland, benefits are the same in London, Glasgow or Stornoway (on the Isle of Lewis).

19   Otherwise, naturally, England, Scotland and Wales would have remained three separate national entities. As geographer A. Frémont (1999 : 220) has written:

> *Les nations affirment d'abord une certaine unité du pouvoir politique et de ses attributs, administration, justice, police, armée. (…) la frontière (est) toujours une limite sans marge entre deux systèmes de référence politique et administrative, deux manières d'être contrôlé, administré, jugé…*

20   In other words, as Keith Robbins has pointed out: 'centralization was not the result of some malign strategy but the inevitable outcome of the demand that there should be some semblance of common standards and common achievements throughout the United Kingdom.' (1998 : 339) And despite the dramatic rise of nationalism, Scots still

insist on parity with England. Interestingly, in early February 2007 e.g., the SNP themselves demanded that plans to improve funding for English universities should be extended to Scotland to catch up with England in the wake of the introduction of tuition fees (Borthwick 2007 & Jeffery 2005 : 113-129). See Part 2 below.

21   That is why, more generally, during the referendum campaign of 1997, Lady Thatcher came up with the following oxymoron to define her country: 'The UK is that rare thing – a multinational nation state.' (1997) That is also why, dealing with the SNP's plans for independence, a former Labour MP (also chairman of the "Labour Vote No Campaign" against devolution in 1978), was asking some vital questions earlier this year: 'Do we want our interest rates set by a foreign country? Do we want every English-based employer in Scotland turned into a foreign investor? Do we want our friends and relations in Corby and Newcastle to be citizens of a separate state?' (Wilson 2007)

22   Centralization in the name of justice and the sacrosanct notion of individual rights, however, was not all roses. The less so as SNP and Plaid Cymru Nationalists had a point when they denounced the British state as the defender of one particular culture, that of the numerical majority. The Welsh language question is a case in point. The Empire too, bore evidence of the fact that if the link between community and territory had to a very large extent been severed within, such was not the case without, beyond the shores of Britain.

23   Whether the state through legislation gives rise to a specific culture, to particular ways of doing things, as illustrated by Revolutionary France, or whether it formally recognizes the supremacy of a pre-existing culture right from the start (Germany), it can indeed hardly be a neutral entity. As A. Dieckhoff (2002 : 155) has written:

> S'il est douteux que les hommes puissent totalement s'abstraire de leur identité, il est tout aussi improbable que l'État soit cet instrument neutre, coupé de tout arrière–plan culturel, dont le libéralisme classique postule l'existence. Sans aucun doute la nature du lien entre État et culture dépend de l'histoire propre à chaque État.

24   Although this is less true of a liberal democracy and unitary state like Britain than of a republican one (or union state) like this country, as

witnessed of course by the large measure of autonomy already enjoyed by, in particular, Scotland in pre-devolution days, the centre eventually came under attack as never before.

2. A Different Paradigm

25   In a 1977 book, former journalist John Osmond, who was the leading figure of the *Campaign for a Welsh Assembly* movement from the 1980s, and is currently head of the Institute of Welsh Affairs in Cardiff and a member of Plaid Cymru, summarized his 'small-is-beautiful' approach when he wrote: 'the politics of devolution are nothing less than a quest for the recovery of community', which to him is the level of human affairs where power and responsibility can be brought together. It was this sense of community identity in Wales, he said, that gave socioeconomic problems their particular political focus.

26   Drawing on, among others, Montesquieu (1689-1755), Tocqueville (1805-1859), M. Weber (1864-1920) and Ferdinand Tonnies (the *Gemeinschaft*, or community, versus *Gessellschaft*, or society, expert, 1855-1936), Osmond explained that, beyond a certain size, groups could not be cemented. Individuals became alienated, they were adrift in a society at the mercy of the new totalitarianism, i.e. big business and the bureaucracy, because, he claimed, in mass society, relationships were essentially contractual (when people can somehow choose to interact with whom they like), not organic (when people can only constitute a closely-knit community). To fight individualism and anomie (when the norms and values upon which social order rests are disintegrating; = rootlessness), man therefore 'needs an anchor in a particular community.' Sovereignty should no longer lie with the state / parliament, but with the communities in Wales. To Osmond, it was 'a philosophy that gives precedence to the idea of the Welsh community over and above individual Welsh people and, more easily, over and above the state'. It was therefore necessary to establish community rights as an indispensable framework for individual freedom; national identity entailed the notion of political solidarity bound up with the idea of community. In short: 'The politics of devolution are about the projection of community into the debate where formerly its reference points were confined merely to the state and the individual.' (1977 : 10, 231 ff., 251, 84 & 245)

27   Did support for Scottish devolution stem from a fundamentally different prerequisite? The answer is probably no. The logic of the 1988 *Claim of Right for Scotland*, that turned out to be a crucial report since its logic was widely accepted (as we shall see), was as follows: Scots in 1707, and since, had assumed that the Union with England guaranteed certain aspects of Scottish identity, including the Church and the Law, but (see page 14 of the report) the Union was now deemed to be 'a threat to the survival of a distinctive culture in Scotland.' Page 2 read: 'Scottish nationhood does not rest on constitutional history alone. It is supported by a culture reaching back over centuries'. The *Claim* therefore concluded that, as old assumptions were no longer being fulfilled, there was a need for a Constitutional Convention (Part 4).

28   The second Constitutional Convention scheme for home rule, *Scotland's Parliament, Scotland's Right* (*Report to the People of Scotland*), approved and published in the autumn of 1995, also took it for granted that 'Scotland (...) has a distinguished and distinctive structural heritage, evident in Scotland's legal system, its educational system, its social, cultural and religious traditions. These things are the very fabric of Scottish society, yet Scotland has come to lack democratic control over them.' The report also insisted that 'there is every reason to expect that the people of Scotland, taking charge of their own destiny, will tackle the issues that confront them more effectively than has Westminster, acting remotely in their stead.'

29   By then, however, the Labour Party had long agreed to endorse the 1988 *Claim* and to attend cross-party talks with a view to launching a Constitutional Convention. Indeed, not only had Labour lost the Glasgow Govan by-election in November 1988 to Jim Sillars, a separatist and former member of the said party, but they were increasingly involved in the fight against the poll-tax. Another problem was that, by early 1989, the SNP were regularly registering 32% in opinion polls. That year, it even gained 25% of the Scottish vote in the Euro-elections.

30   Philosophically, the decision was in fact most unlike Labour: some of the party's top members, including James Callaghan and Neil Kinnock, had indeed always believed in economic planning and therefore state intervention, which could only conflict with a devolution

agenda. But, as we have just seen, by the turn of the 1990s, times seemed to have changed: intense lobbying at constituency level by e.g. the unions and the Labour Action Group, formed in 1990, had led the party to become more nationalist to prevent the electorate swinging against it. Many Labour activists had actually joined forces with SNP grass-roots members in their fight against deindustrialisation and the restructuring of the manufacturing sector.

31　The whole move was epitomized by Donald Dewar's[2] rhetoric with relation to devolution and the national question. In his 18 November 1998 Spectator Lecture, entitled 'Devolved Britons: Scotland in the UK', he definitely had a point, of course, when he said that 'no change would have short-changed the Scottish people', when he insisted that 'no one would argue that arrangements for emptying the bins should be a matter for Westminster, or foreign policy a matter for local councils', or when he stated that 'we need to find the right level for decisions on the whole range of issues which lie in between.' However, it is not delegation of power as such that is a problem, quite the opposite, but the specific prerequisite it is based upon in the case of the UK.

32　Interestingly, to Donald Dewar, after almost three hundred years, there was 'a common heritage, economic links, shared experiences, challenges and opportunities' between the two countries, plus 'shared interests in the world.' Nevertheless, he was adamant Scotland had preserved her 'identity successfully through union with a bigger neighbour'. Devolution was 'about better governance within the space we share. It is about giving Scottish institutions, the Scottish difference, the chance to develop, to contribute to the whole country.' Finally, to him, 'the logic of separatism (was) outdated.' But, again, it seems, not for reasons that have to do with liberal politics:

> *Why separate out our foreign policies when our interests are common? Why separate out our defence policies when our interests are common? Why break up our tax system or the welfare state when they reflect our common commitment to a decent life for all our people? Why break up our economy when it has melded over 300 years into a common whole?*

33   It is naturally a good thing that a state should learn to neutralize itself (i.e. to limit its own power), but in the case of devolution there has merely been a transfer of power, not a reassessment of its nature. To make matters worse, power has, in some cases, been devolved on the basis of nationality as a carrier of rights.

34   In other words: '(l'idée de communauté a) introduit une rupture dans la dynamique émancipatrice des Lumières en accréditant l'idée que l'existentiel peut être du ressort du politique. Et que cet objectif est l'idéal de la démocratie parfaite.' (Slama 2005 : 92) But diverse institutions just cannot exist in a vacuum separate from policies and rights (Mitchell 2005, 49). As underlined by philosopher A. Renaut:

> *reconnaître de tels droits collectifs consiste toujours plus ou moins à introduire un autre sujet de droit que le sujet individuel, et donc à mettre la reconnaissance de ce dernier en concurrence avec un autre porteur de droits (la communauté de culture et de traditions) vis-à-vis duquel il devient possible de relativiser la valorisation absolue des libertés individuelles. (2004 : 193)*

35   What John Osmond e.g. hoped for in the 1970s has then somehow happened. The Scotland Act has created a new locus of political power based on the premise that there is a separate political will in Scotland. This approach is a radical departure from the Hobbesian notion that political productions are characterized by artificiality and are fundamentally arbitrary. To put it differently, I would say that the devolution settlement is somehow apolitical in the sense that it results from the naturalistic idea that a polity must be organised on the basis of a form of necessity that exists outside the realm of the political (see Rosset 1986 : 201-312).

36   Illustrative of this is Donald Dewar's reply to the Queen's address on 1 July 1999 when the Holyrood Parliament was offically opened. He first thanked Elizabeth II for the Mace and then said: 'This is about more than our politics and our laws. This is about who we are, how we carry ourselves.' Devolution, as we have seen, would never have been introduced, had many Scots and quite a few Welsh never feared for the future of their cultures, or never understood their relationship with England primarily in terms of cultural and economic oppression.

37   Answers to problems have to some extent been clearly re-
      territorialized, i.e. naturalized within the UK: they are not seen as
      resulting from e.g. unhappy circumstances (due to forces that reach
      far beyond any of the national territories involved), they are at heart
      part and parcel of a particular culture, way of life, etc., all of which
      are said to be specific. Above all, it is the notion of equal citizenship
      that has been naturalized. A good illustration of this is the tuition fees
      controversy: the right to have the right not to pay them is 100% na-
      tionality / territory–based.

38   University fees for all English students have been dramatically in-
      creased (from over £1,000 to around £3,000 max. a year). The legisla-
      tion, passed by the Westminster Parliament thanks to, notably, the
      support of Scottish MPs, but rejected by the Edinburgh Parliament
      and the Welsh Assembly, does not therefore apply to Scottish or
      Welsh students, which means that any English student in Scotland or
      Wales will not be treated the same as his Scottish / Welsh counter-
      parts.

39   The new constitutional settlement, as it stands, would only make
      sense if British society did not exist. In terms of individual freedom,
      the logic is that UK citizenship may still exist, but it has been severely
      curtailed in some cases. In the case of tuition fees indeed, the notion
      of 'political' community has clearly been superseded by that of 'nat-
      ural' community. Moreover, this issue crucially gives the lie to a typ-
      ically nationalist assumption, namely that difference and equality are
      natural bedfellows.

40   Another example of this situation was the vote on the Foundation
      Hospitals Bill in early July and November 2003. Foundation (trust)
      hospitals, unlike the average NHS hospital, can borrow money for de-
      velopment from a fund controlled by the Treasury; they are governed
      by a council of elected local people and overseen by an independent
      regulator, which, to some, including quite a few Labour MPs, amounts
      to privatization. The government managed to secure a majority in fa-
      vour of the Bill only through the Welsh and Scottish MPs supporting
      it, while both Holyrood and Cardiff Bay finally rejected foundation
      hospitals.

41   On the whole, the problem is indeed that the asymmetry that charac-
      terizes devolution does not seem to match the very real social and

economic imbalance between rich and poor, town and country, and so on and so forth, within the British nations / regions themselves. Poverty problems, economic underachievement, among others, have never closely followed national / cultural fault-lines within the UK either. From 2000, the areas able to attract Objective 1 funding e.g. (as a consequence of their GDP *per capita* being less than 75% of the EU average) are West Wales and the Valleys, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (Drinkwater & Blackaby 2004 : 9).

42   An implicit recognition that the foregoing is probably true was Lynda Clark's (QC, MP, and Advocate General for Scotland) statement during a symposium at the headquarters of the British Council in Paris in February 2003. On the one hand, talking about the relationship between Westminster and the devolved Parliament, she said: 'It is a partnership that recognises diversity and distinctiveness. The diversity of four countries within the United Kingdom, with shared cultures, shared values and shared interests, but with distinctive needs and priorities.' On the other hand, only seconds before, she had said: 'These contacts help us share experience and perspectives on key issues such as health and poverty.' (2003) Which does naturally raise the following question: what is the point of cooperation if precisely the 'needs and priorities' are 'distinctive' no matter what?

43   By and large then, devolution is a real revolution as it fundamentally alters a 300-year-old relationship between the individual and the central state in Britain, and challenges the notion of equal citizenship.

44   My contention may sound strange in that pro-devolution parties (from the SNP and Plaid Cymru to Labour and the Greens) are normally thought of as left-of-centre parties, and therefore seen as open-minded and fundamentally progressive. However, part of the Left has always been perfectly happy with the notion of applying the class concept – based on the idea that the top-end of society exploits the bottom-end – to the concepts of culture and territory. Michael Hechter's internal colonialism theory[3] is a case in point (1975).

45   It may well be that what Anne-Marie Thiesse (2006 : 226) has written about the nation state does also apply to the devolution settlement in the sense that there is probably no big qualitative difference between their respective premises:

> *L'entrée dans la modernité sous les auspices du national s'est donc faite à reculons. L'avenir a été conçu comme la préservation d'un déjà-là. En quelque sorte, l'ère nationale a été placée sous le signe de la fin de l'histoire. La difficulté à dire positivement la modernité et le changement occultés au profit d'une représentation mythique de la nation immuable, a constitué une des grandes fragilités des États-nations du XXᵉ siècle. (…) La « désessentialisation » de la nation, son historicisation s'avèrent indispensables pour comprendre les enjeux actuels.*

Conclusion

46 By way of conclusion, I will say that the chances are the logic of devolution, because of its very premises, will lead to separation as it takes for granted a crucial assumption of Nationalists, namely that nations pre-exist, that nations must come first, or, in the words of Robert Tudur Jones (Welsh historian and Nationalist), that 'nation comes before state – that is the condition of liberty.' (1974 : 204) Hence, most probably, the fact that the war of words between the SNP and the Labour government in the run-up to the May 2007 Scottish election centred almost exclusively upon the question of how better off or worse off an independent Scotland would be.

47 Now, from a purely academic point of view, devolution calls into question the very validity of much liberal thinking, from John Locke and John Stuart Mill to Harvard philosopher John Rawls e.g., to the extent that the settlement merely ignores that we become what we are and – vitally – that individual rights can never be dependent upon one's background because, otherwise, they can never be absolute. The tuition fees controversy, I think, illustrates the point.

48 The way forward perhaps (a long-term revolution, this!), would be for us to change our approach to the national question. As underlined by U. Özkırımlı (2005 : 194):

> The challenge ahead of us is to write a history from outside the ideology of the nation-state. The challenge is enormous as it requires historians to come to grips with their own ethical values, and the enormity of it derives from the fact that these values have themselves been intimately shaped by the nation-state.

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1   Quasi-federalism is a system in which the overall structure is predominantly that of a federation; however, the central government does retain some overriding unilateral powers akin to those in unitary (centralized) systems (Watts 2002).

2   D. Dewar went on to become Scottish Secretary in 1997-1999, and then Scotland's first-ever First Minister until his death in October 2000.

3   The British periphery, Marxist historian M. Hechter claims, provides eg labour and raw materials for the centre, and, at the same time, a market for the latter's more sophisticated goods. As it is over-reliant on just a few products / industries, the periphery's economy therefore is dependent upon the centre's diversified economy. Crucially, Hechter goes so far as to talk about an opposition between core and periphery resulting from a cultural division of labour, that is to say one based on cultural differences, the richest region (England) being also the region inhabited by the people whose culture is dominant.

English

The devolution of power to Scotland and Wales is no marginal adjustment. Not only has the relationship between Westminster and the periphery been redefined, but the 1998 Wales and Scotland Acts have also introduced a form of quasi-federalism into British government: Scotland and Wales now enjoy a large measure of legislative and financial autonomy. Not to mention the impact in the long run for England herself and, of course, the Union.
It is however probable that devolution has had other implications for Britain as a polity to the extent that it actually amounts to a major U-turn in the way one approaches the questions of belonging, democratic rights and duties, national solidarity, i.e. the question of citizenship.

The 1707 Union, on the one hand, has resulted in a formal equalizing of rights and duties; otherwise, naturally, England, Scotland and Wales would have remained three separate national entities. In other words, functionality, not nationality, has been given pride of place as a means of organizing society.

Devolution, on the other hand, has introduced an altogether different paradigm. In the words of Welsh thinker John Osmond, 'the politics of devolution are about the projection of community into the debate where formerly its reference points were confined merely to the state and the individual.' As a matter of fact, power has, in some cases (education, health), been devolved on the basis of nationality as a carrier of rights. Answers to problems have therefore been clearly re-territorialized, i.e. naturalized, within the UK. Devolution is then a real revolution as it fundamentally alters a 300-year-old relationship between the individual and the central state in Britain, and challenges the notion of equal citizenship.

Français

La dévolution des pouvoirs à l'Écosse et au pays de Galles représente un grand bouleversement constitutionnel. Non seulement la relation entre Westminster et la périphérie a-t-elle été redéfinie, mais les *Wales & Scotland Acts* de 1998 ont également introduit une forme de quasi-fédéralisme dans la manière dont est gouverné le Royaume-Uni. Écosse et Galles bénéficient désormais d'une bonne dose d'autonomie législative et financière, sans parler des répercussions à long terme d'une telle situation pour l'Angleterre elle-même, et donc, naturellement, l'Union.

Il est cependant probable que la nouvelle donne constitutionnelle correspond en fait d'ores et déjà à un complet revirement dans la façon dont est appréhendée la question de l'appartenance, celle des droits et des devoirs démocratiques, celle de la solidarité nationale, c'est-à-dire, plus généralement, celle de la citoyenneté.

L'Union de 1707, d'une part, a entraîné une mise à plat des droits et devoirs, sans quoi Angleterre, Écosse et pays de Galles seraient demeurés trois entités nationales distinctes de ce point de vue. En d'autres termes, c'est le concept de fonctionnalité, et non de nationalité, qui a prévalu comme moyen d'organiser la société. La dévolution, d'autre part, a introduit un paradigme tout à fait différent. Selon le penseur gallois John Osmond, « dévolution signifie irruption de l'idée de communauté dans un débat où les points de référence étaient auparavant confinés à l'État et à l'individu. » En effet, le pouvoir, dans certains cas (éducation, santé), a été décentralisé en vertu d'un vecteur de droits qui n'est autre que la nationalité. Les réponses apportées aux divers problèmes rencontrés ont donc à l'évidence été re-territorialisées, c'est-à-dire naturalisées, à l'intérieur même du Royaume-Uni. C'est pourquoi la dévolution est une véritable révolution : elle change la relation, vieille de trois cents ans, entre individu et État central, tout en remettant en cause l'idée d'égale citoyenneté.

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