

"There was truth in what the independence sectors objected to"

VB verfassungsblog.de/truth-independence-sectors-objected/

Scotland has opted for staying British at last. Do you expect that this outcome will settle the matter of Scottish independence once and for all?

No. On the contrary, it will generate a thick layer made from the mix of hope and disillusionment that will be present in many domains— politics, emotions, socialite. It will hover over the winners and the losers in this referendum. As commentators have said: something has changed and it will mark what comes next.

Many observers see the Scottish independence movement as a worrying sign of atavistic national resentment and parochialism. Do you agree?

No. I don't. I think it belongs to our global modernity — it is not an inheritance of the past reborn as nationalism. It is more complex. I was recently (in mid-August) in a session of the Edinburgh Parliament – they invited several of us to speak in "closed chambers" as they say: only invited could be there plus the politicians, and after that, a dinner with the head of Scottish government, Alex Salmond. And I must say I began to feel (not so much think) that if I were Scottish, I would want to separate, and not because of nationalisms à la English vs Scottish, but because of these extraordinary powerful systems of capture at the top concentrated in London and its region (we have that in the US as well), and the orientation of so many institutions towards the queen of capture, London, the global city.

Scotland is not the only region in Europe with a strong independence movement – Catalonia springs to mind, but also parts of northern Italy, Belgium and France. Is regional separatism a not-so-regional phenomenon after all?

Nice way of putting it. Separatism are shaped by specific histories and often top-down designs of borders from above, that do not fit well with historic organizational autonomies. There is probably enormous specificity to all of this, but quite possibly we can identify patterns in Europe that are quite different from these top-down processes in Africa or Latin America or Asia. So perhaps Scotland's search for autonomy has a European character, more like Catalunya than the search for autonomies in the far west of China.

Is nationalism the right term to describe what we find in these places?

It is structural rather than national, even if for many people the vocabulary is about the national.... And that is the poverty of our current politics, that it has failed to generate a language for our current times, so it keeps falling back on older explanations.

What could other nation states accommodating Global Cities on their territory learn from the Anglo-Scottish experience?

Well, perhaps, that having a major power system reaching deep into what you think of as your territory is something that almost half of the Scots who voted at least, do not like. Westminster – the UK government— should learn something. And clearly they have the facts – and this may well have led them to plead and to promise Scotland a better position vis à vis resource flows and autonomies. This tells me that there was truth in what the independence sectors objected to.

Questions by Maximilian Steinbeis

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