

Devolution splits the country

Gordon Brown's idea that offering devolution to Scotland would cement the Union and satisfy the demands of the separatists always seemed to me to be misconceived. That was why I wrote "The Death of Britain?" and watched more in sorrow than anger as Labour's reforms gave a great platform to the SNP and duly led to the need for a referendum to settle the issue by asking the Scottish voters.

Today the PM is right to say there is no need for a second referendum so soon after the first delivered a clear result, especially given SNP pledges that the referendum would be a once in a generation event. Had the SNP won I doubt they would now be giving Scottish people a second vote to reconsider their decision to leave.

The SNP lost the referendum in part because they had not thought through some of the most basic points about leaving the U.K. They seemed to think they could stay in the pound common currency supported by the Bank of England. There is no way the Bank of England could continue to take Scottish needs into account or act as lender of last resort to Scottish banks.

They did not set out well how Scottish members of our armed forces would adjust. If the aim is to transfer their contracts to a Scottish army, navy and airforce there would need to be arrangements over equipment and it would make only a small force. If we assume the idea is that we would honour their contracts, that would mean they would have to commit their loyalty and service to a country other than their own. They would also be committed to an armed service with a nuclear deterrent that the SNP oppose.

They did not reveal how the large gap between Scottish tax revenue and current spending would be filled. They did stress the oil revenues which have now been slashed by a large fall in the oil price.

There was no clear pledge to take their share of the U.K. national debt on exit.

Quite often it seemed some of the SNP did not want independence, favouring a muddle of the pound and EU membership Instead.

It should now be quite clear that offering more and more devolved powers to the Scottish Parliament is not going to reconcile proponents of independence to the U.K. The SNP seeks to turn all debates in the U.K. Parliament into arguments about the relative powers of the Union pArliament and the devolved government. They do not want devolution to work.