

**Institution: The University of Edinburgh**

**Unit of Assessment: 21 Politics and International Studies**

**Title of case study: The Welfare State and the Scottish Constitutional Debate**

### 1. Summary of the impact

Research by Jeffery and McEwen on the relationship between nationalism and the welfare state has had two main impacts on the debate over Scotland's constitutional future. Firstly, the research has influenced the discourse and strategies of political elites in both the Scottish National Party and the Labour Party. Both have drawn on the research to mobilise support through invoking ideas about the relationship between 'social citizenship,' 'social union' and the welfare state, and its implications for Scottish devolution or independence. Secondly, the research has been drawn on by the cross-party Calman Commission on Scottish Devolution, notably to underpin its recommendations on financial accountability, which provided the basis for the 2012 Scotland Act.

### 2. Underpinning research

The impact is underpinned by research carried out by Jeffery, Professor of Politics (at Edinburgh since 2004) and McEwen, Senior Lecturer in Politics (at Edinburgh since 2001).

McEwen's work (2005, 2006) has focused on how welfare state institutions and services can contribute to a shared sense of nationhood and statewide solidarity in multinational states. Her work shows how welfare states can strengthen attachment to the nation-state as a political community, thereby containing demands for regional autonomy and independence, and, conversely, how demands for regional self-government can be fuelled by welfare state retrenchment which undermines the state's role as the guarantor of welfare across the state as a whole. This research has thus shown how welfare policy can become a terrain that is contested between statewide and non-statewide political parties in decentralised and federal states, with each seeking support to pursue welfare goals at different scales of political community. Her comparative work on Scotland/the UK and Québec/Canada (2006) suggested that concepts such as that of 'social union', which is prominent in Canadian political discourse, can be invoked to justify competing forms of 'welfare nationalism': either a continued understanding of political community at the level of the UK, or to establish a rival or successor understanding of political community in Scotland.

Jeffery entered this field in the mid-2000s, building directly on McEwen's work to explore similar issues of welfare and political community. His work drew on T.H. Marshall's concept of social citizenship, as well as research he directed on public attitudes and devolution as part of the ESRC Devolution Programme. For Marshall, 'social citizenship' referred to the minimal set of shared rights and entitlements to public service provision, including health care, social security, affordable housing and education, reflecting shared citizenship status. Jeffery showed how the transfer of many of these policy fields through devolution had led to a fragmentation of social citizenship rights across UK and devolved administrations. He also highlighted seemingly contradictory public preferences, including among Scots, for UK-wide shared social rights alongside strong support for devolved administrations making their own (inevitably divergent) policy decisions (Jeffery 2006, 2009). Echoing McEwen's work, Jeffery viewed these paradoxical preferences regarding welfare and social rights as implying a tension between allegiances at different scales of political community. He argued that a key part of reconciling these tensions would need to involve territorial financial arrangements that balanced measures to ensure some level of statewide equity in policy outcomes with others that gave devolved governments sufficient fiscal autonomy to engage in the accountable, devolved-level decision-making their citizens expected (Jeffery 2011).

### 3. References to the research

Jeffery, Charlie (2006), 'Devolution and Social Citizenship: Which Society, Whose Citizenship?' in

Greer, Scott (ed.), *Territory, Democracy and Justice. Regionalism and Federalism in Western Democracies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 67-91. Available from HEI.

Jeffery, Charlie (2009), 'Devolution in the United Kingdom: Problems of a Piecemeal Approach to Constitutional Change', *Publius. The Journal of Federalism*, 39/2: 289-313. DOI: [10.1093/publius/pjn038](https://doi.org/10.1093/publius/pjn038).

Jeffery, Charlie (2011), 'Problems of Territorial Finance: UK Devolution in Perspective', in Courchene, Tom, et al, eds, *The Federal Idea. Essays in Honour of Ronald L. Watts*. Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, pp. 379-94. Available from HEI.

McEwen, N and L Moreno, eds (2005), *The Territorial Politics of Welfare*, Oxford: Routledge. Available from HEI.

McEwen, Nicola (2006), *Nationalism and the State: Welfare and Identity in Scotland and Quebec*. Brussels: Peter Lang. Available from HEI.

#### 4. Details of the impact

Jeffery and McEwen's research has (1) informed the discourse and strategies of political elites on both sides of the constitutional debate, and (2) strongly shaped the Commission on Scottish Devolution (Calman Commission) and the resulting provisions on fiscal autonomy in the 2012 Scotland Act.

(1) McEwen's research initially shaped the thinking of the Scottish Government's Constitutional Affairs Minister during the Scottish Government's National Conversation on Scotland's constitutional future (2007-2009). The Minister had previously reviewed McEwen's 2006 book for the Sunday Herald in May 2006 and was influenced by the comparisons with Quebec. McEwen's research ideas were conveyed in a private meeting of selected academics convened by the Constitutional Affairs Minister in 2008 and 2009. The SNP subsequently invited McEwen to present at an 'away day' of advisers in Autumn 2011. The Minister testifies to the importance of these meetings and McEwen's research in general to the Government's thinking on Scotland's welfare policy and its relationship with the rest of the UK after independence. He writes: 'Academic research, including McEwen's work on Scotland and Quebec, informed our deliberations within government when I was Minister with responsibility for the Constitution...I took note in particular of the insights from the Quebec referendum experience and the issues of welfare and social policy she examined. This helped to inform our thinking on the continuation of a social union after Scottish independence' (5.1).

On the other side of the constitutional debate, Jeffery's research on social citizenship influenced senior members of the Labour Party who used it to justify a further-reaching form of devolution, rather than full independence for Scotland. In Summer and Autumn 2007, Jeffery had several meetings with the Scottish Labour leader, and with the Director General for Devolution within the UK Government (5.2). In these meetings they discussed Jeffery's ideas on social citizenship as a frame for thinking about political community on a UK-wide level. The Scottish Labour leader drew on these ideas in a major speech on St Andrew's Day, 30 November 2007, which 'pre-announced' what then became the (Calman) Commission on Scottish Devolution in April 2008 (5.3). While the speech itself was delivered shortly before the REF reporting period, it set out the rationale and remit for the subsequent Commission. In the speech, the Labour leader called for a remit which would emphasise the need for greater fiscal autonomy for the Scottish Parliament in order to bring greater accountability to devolved decision-making, while at the same time securing continued access of Scots to the welfare state, referring to this as 'our social citizenship'.

(2) Jeffery's work on social citizenship not only helped shape Labour thinking on the remit of the Calman Commission; it went on to influence the multi-party Commission after it was set up in April 2008. The then Director General for Devolution, with whom Jeffery had previously shared his ideas about the importance of citizenship rights and the social union (see above), became Secretary of the Calman Commission with responsibility for drafting its reports (5.2). Jeffery was invited to brief the Commission at a private meeting held in May 2008, before it took wider

evidence, in which he outlined how devolution impacted on social citizenship rights.

Jeffery's ideas on social citizenship and the 'social union' were deployed in the Commission's reports. Ideas of the 'social union' were used to defend the retention at UK government level of powers over social security and redistributive taxation, 'because it is an aspect of the social union to which Scotland belongs' (Calman, 2009: 8) (5.4). His work informed the Commission's view that 'there are social rights which should also be substantially the same, even when it is best that they are separately run in Scotland' (Calman, 2009: 6) (5.4). These arguments about the social union were reiterated in the White Paper on a new Scotland Bill (Scotland Office 2009: 4) (5.5), which was the UK Government's response to the Calman Report, and which became the basis of the 2012 Scotland Act.

Jeffery's research also influenced the Calman Report's recommendations on finance. A key part of the Commission's remit was to recommend mechanisms to strengthen the Scottish Parliament's financial accountability. In 2008, Jeffery was appointed to the Independent Expert Group on Finance established to advise the Calman Commission on these questions. As the only political scientist in a group composed mainly of economists, Jeffery was central to ensuring the Commission's discussion of territorial finance was placed within a political and constitutional context. The Secretary of the Calman Commission confirmed that Jeffery's contribution persuaded the Commission that finance is not solely a technical matter but profoundly political, and therefore required the Commission to address issues of the balance of statewide equity vs. devolved autonomy/accountability as well as questions of economic efficiency. He noted that 'work at Edinburgh was critical' in 'the contribution of the key idea that financial systems serve constitutional ends' (5.2). Jeffery's ideas on the relationship between equity and autonomy were adopted as two of the 'basic principles' to inform 'considerations for funding sub-national governments' and subsequent 'constitutional design' (Independent Expert Group, 2008: 7-9; 10) (5.6) adopted by the Calman Commission in its interim (Calman Commission 2008: 62-4; 68) (5.3) and final (Calman Commission, 2009: 66, 76, 89) (5.4) reports. These principles were in turn taken forward into the UK Government's White Paper (Scotland Office 2009: 3-4; 8-9) (5.5) and underlay the new provisions on fiscal autonomy in the 2012 Scotland Act which, from 2015, will increase the proportion of Scottish Parliament spending covered by tax decisions accountable to Scottish voters from around 14% to around 35%.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

PDFs of all web links are available at [www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/REF2014REF3B/UoA+21](http://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/REF2014REF3B/UoA+21)

5.1 Email confirming impact of McEwen's work from the Scottish Government's former Constitutional Affairs Minister.

5.2 Email confirming impact of Jeffery's work on the Calman Commission, from former Director General for Devolution within the UK Government/Secretary of the Calman Commission.

5.3 Calman Commission (2008), *The Future of Scottish Devolution within the Union: A First Report*, Edinburgh: Commission on Scottish Devolution, available at: <http://www.commissiononscottishdevolution.org.uk/uploads/2008-12-01-vol-1-final--bm.pdf>

5.4 Calman Commission (2009), *Serving Scotland Better: Scotland and the United Kingdom in the 21st Century*, Edinburgh: Commission on Scottish Devolution, available at: [http://www.referendumescozia.cat/uploads/1/1/4/2/11420201/final\\_report-comissi\\_calman.pdf](http://www.referendumescozia.cat/uploads/1/1/4/2/11420201/final_report-comissi_calman.pdf)

5.5 Scotland Office (2009), *Scotland's Future in the United Kingdom. Building on Ten Years of Scottish Devolution*, Cm 7738, London: The Stationery Office, available at: <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm77/7738/7738.pdf>

5.6 Independent Expert Group (2008), *First Evidence from the Independent Expert Group to the Commission on Scottish Devolution*, available at: <http://www.hw.ac.uk/reference/ieg-first-evidence.pdf>